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The prize-winning design for the Olympic Green. Photo by Qian Bingge



Design Firm Cleans Up at 2008 Olympic Contest

By Xiao Rong

An American architecture company has won big in the 2008 Olympic venue design contest.

San Francisco-based Sasaki Associates together with Tianjin Huahui Architect and Design Company won the US\$250,000 top prize for the Olympic Green, the nucleus of the Games which includes the Olympic Park, Athletes Village and stadium.

Sasaki also collected second prize for its design for the Wukesong Sports and Culture Center. No design was deemed good enough for the top prize. Swiss firm Burckhardt+PartnerAG also won second prize.

Thirteen prize-winners

were selected from 89 bids. The public can vote for their favorite at the Beijing International Convention Center July 16 to 26. Organizers said actual construction will not necessarily follow the winning plans, but they will draw ideas from the plans as much as possible.

"We would like to stress the importance of water and the combination of mountains with water. I think a place which is abundant with water is the most beautiful one," said Liu Thai-Ker, jury president, a Singaporean architect and urban planning expert.

He said the first prize for the Olympic Green best represents this traditional idea in Chinese culture.

New Rich Face Music

Taxation system punishes payers, rewards dodgers

By Xiao Rong

The 10 richest men in China have come under fire from the Chinese media as tax dodgers in recent weeks.

"The fact that the rich evade tax proves that our income tax system doesn't work well in adjusting the gap between the rich and the poor. As a result, the rich get richer," wrote a commentator in *Beijing Youth Daily* on July 3.

"The original progressive intent of our tax system has actually become regressive," said Ma Shiling in a July 18 article in the *International Financial Times*.

But the 10 richest individuals recently listed in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* see themselves as soft targets for a question much more complex to resolve.

System loopholes

"The main reason for private entrepreneurs being able to duck income tax by not drawing a salary from their companies lies in loopholes in our tax system," said Sun Gang, taxation division director at the Fiscal Science Research Institute of the Ministry of Finance.

Sun says the proliferation and duplication of taxes makes evasion almost irresistible.

"First the wages are taxed as personal income tax — but then the net wages are deducted from the company's profits. The profits are taxed as corporate income tax. Then these net profits are distributed to shareholders as dividends, at which point another 20 percent tax is levied on the shareholders."

That's why so many private entrepreneurs are reluctant to draw salaries for themselves. It will not help company development, says Qian Cheng, vice director of the Finance College of Renmin University.

Sun said supervision and auditing of companies awaits strengthening to curb dubious deductibles.

"Personal income should be differentiated from company earnings so that business owners who buy houses or cars in their company name can be prevented from doing so," he said.

Who are big taxpayers?

"On the one hand, the Chinese taxation system needs further improvement and is relatively

ineffective in the imposition of personal income taxes, and on the other, most of the highly paid didn't pay as much tax as they should," said Qian.

As Professor Hu An'gang of the Institute of Public Administration and Management of Tsinghua University holds, high-income earners — who last year formed less than 20 percent of the total population and own more than 80 percent of the country's 7,000 billion yuan savings — contribute

third of these 30,000 key taxpayers and set up files for 10,044 high earners, mostly private entrepreneurs.

"There's still a long way to go for China's personal income tax system to help adjust income distribution in society," said Qian Cheng.

"As long as cash flows dominate in China, and no networks among the banks works, tax evasion will persist due to a lack of official supervision on personal income."

'After all, you can only eat three meals a day no matter how rich you are.'

— Huang Fajing, entrepreneur

less than 10 percent of the nation's total income tax.

Individual income tax in Beijing has become the second-largest source of tax revenue, next only to business tax, reaching 50.32 billion yuan in the first half of 2002.

But statistics from the tax bureau of Haidian district, one of the areas with the greatest number of wealthy people in the city, show 88 percent of personal income tax derives from salaries.

About 10 percent comes from non-salary income, including dividends or bonus interest, the main source of income for the wealthy.

Asked about how to levy taxes on non-salary income, an official at Beijing Tax Bureau said it was really difficult to verify the exact amount of "black income".

To enforce personal income tax on the rich, the city tax bureau last month defined the key taxpayers as those whose annual income surpasses 100,000 yuan and those with multiple channels of income.

Haidian alone covers one

Redistribution

The Gini Coefficient, the international measure of income distribution, stands at 0.458 in China, breaching the international warning standard of 0.4. It is said by economists that Chinese society has thus entered a period of income distribution inequity.

Qian said broadly speaking, she supported the enforcement of personal income taxation on the wealthy to prevent the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

"But we should never overemphasize the function of personal income tax. Income tax can only make the rich less rich, instead of making the poor richer. So it's more important to control the initial distribution channel."

The critical problem is how to alleviate poverty by strengthening social security, said Qian.

"One efficient way is to create more job opportunities by encouraging more private entrepreneurs to boost investments."

Qian has just returned from Yantai in Shandong, where she gave lectures on taxes to local pri-

vate entrepreneurs.

Most of the entrepreneurs, she said, felt puzzled about the latest tightening of inspections on their income tax.

"Some said they would rather maintain the original size of the company than reinvest their own earnings, as the latter option would result in heavier taxes."

"So if the private entrepreneurs can enjoy certain tax preferential policies for reinvestment, it will help solve the unemployment problem."

Chen Huai, director of the Market Economy Research Institute of the Development Research Center under the State Council echoed Qian's sentiments. It is wrong to narrow the purpose of income tax collection into a simple attempt to deprive the rich of their economic superiority.

"In the market economy, the income gap plays an important role in arousing people's enthusiasm for work and raising efficiency," he said.

"The international practice of balancing incomes between the rich and the poor does not depend just on income tax, but a series of related taxes — such as property tax, gift tax and inheritance tax," Chen added.

Qian said in a nutshell, tax policies should be especially prudent about protecting private enterprises that have been playing an increasingly important role in China's economy.

She revealed national tax departments are discussing stipulating a new tax item that benefits private entrepreneurs who reinvest income.

Rich defend themselves

"Some rich people may evade taxes, but I think it's the duty of every citizen of society to pay taxes, so we should not overemphasize taxation of the wealthy," said Huang Fajing, manager of Rifeng Lighter Manufacturing Compa-

ny, from Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, an area where private enterprises boom.

In Huang's opinion, the more money an enterprise earns, the more risk it is most likely taking.

"Sometimes when your fortune grows, what you most care about is the long-term development of the whole company and the fulfillment of your personal value rather than your personal interests."

"After all, you can only eat three meals a day no matter how rich you are."

Huang told *Beijing Today* most private entrepreneurs in Wenzhou pay income taxes legally, but the tax burden is really a little bit heavy for small companies.

"Although I am a rich person by local standards, most of my personal assets are being constantly reinvested into the expansion of my company, and that is usually repeatedly taxed," said Huang.

A private business owner in Beijing expressed his worry about the recent tightening of taxes on the rich.

"Most of our private entrepreneurs earn money by legal means. If the country is now enforcing tax on us, it may hurt the burgeoning private enterprises. And there may exist the possibility some entrepreneurs will transfer their earnings abroad," said he, who requested anonymity.

Beijing Today tried to contact Liu Yonghao, one of the top 10 richest in China as assessed by *Forbes* magazine and president of New Hope Group.

His secretary Luo Jie said Liu draws "routine salaries" from the company and pays income taxes on them.

"All the board of directors, including the staff, must draw salaries, as stipulated by our group," he said.



Haidian personal income tax office sees some of the wealthiest visitors in the country. Photo by Qu Liyan

Government Kicks Off Recycling of Poor Products

Ten makers of sub-par products have been listed as the first targets of a national quality check campaign

By Zhu Ying/Shan Jinliang

On Tuesday, the State Administration of Quality Supervision and Quarantine made its first use of a system in which unqualified products can be forced to be recycled since the system went into effect this April.

The administration announced the focus of this debut campaign is electrical plugs and sockets with serious quality problems made by ten domestic companies. The defective products have been ordered to be recycled following the administration's survey of the market conducted in the second

quarter of the year, which showed they did not meet state heat resistance, burn resistance and internal construction standards.

Consumers can demand to return plugs and sockets found to have problems to shopping markets or the ten listed manufacturers.

According to Liu Zhaobin, head of the law and regulation department of the State Administration of Quality Supervision, the recycling system is similar to other countries' auto recall systems, but aimed at a wider range of products, including home appliances and electronics.

Liu Chunyan, deputy director of the product department of the administration, said the system will become routine, giving the state the right to recycle products found to have quality problems.

Local quality departments will keep track of all recycling procedures nationwide, and companies that refuse to recycle or only recycle a small quantity of their sub-standard products will be severely punished, paying one-time fines of up to 100,000 yuan.

Recycling is more thorough than recalls, said Wu Shaoping, professor of the Economics

Research Institute of the Capital University of Economics and Business. Recalls provide for the repair of defective parts of products rather than the return or replacing of old products, he added, while recycling is a kind of coercive, unconditional act, requiring the full compensation of a customer's payment for a product.

Under the recycling system, companies will pay high prices for manufacturing sub-par products and face long-term pressure to maintain quality, said Cheng Dongqi, director of the economics research institute under the State

Development Planning Commission. The system should also help push the improvement of technological reform and upgrading in domestic industries.

An executive who requested anonymity from Shanghai Chenglong Electronics Corp., one of the 10 listed companies, said the company has received a notice from the national quality administration and stopped production of all electrical plugs and sockets on Tuesday. He added that stopping production is a good decision considering the facility's problems.

Remittance Bridge Spans Strait

By Zhang Ran

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) announced on July 11 the start of direct remittance and settlement services with Taiwan province, followed by the bank's Xiamen branch in Fujian province making its first remittance from Taiwan on Tuesday.

The whole procedure took only one hour. The shortened route should save bank clients an average of \$15-25 per remittance compared to previous fees, with the length of time needed for the process almost halved to within one day. Due to the use of different currencies on the two sides of the strait, no Chinese *renminbi* or new Taiwan dollars can be handled at this point.

ICBC had signed agreements with 22 local banks and 12 foreign banks operating in the long-separated island province as its correspondent banks, through which ICBC can handle remittances, letters of credit and settlements across the Taiwan Strait.

By straightening the route for business exchange, operational costs will drop and fresh business opportunities should rise.

Taiwanese investors have poured \$60 billion of investment into more than 40,000 businesses on the mainland since 1978, but previously had to make remittances and settle accounts through third parties, mostly Hong Kong or US-based banks, due to political barriers.

Internet Publications to Be on the Up and Up

By Shan Jinliang

Aiming to create a sound Internet environment in China, the State Press and Publications Administration and the Ministry of Information Industry issued the Internet Publications Management Temporary Regulation last week.

According to the regulation, the term "Internet publications" refers to online communications recorded by Internet information providers of their own works or edited versions of others' works on the Internet. Publications covered by the regulation include books, newspapers and other printed works, videotapes, art, and social and scientific research.

All Internet publishing organizations have to receive approval from their local governments in terms of their publication scope, staff, capital, equipment and offices.

Illegal Internet publishing organizations will be banned and all the appliances, tools and income related to illegal acts will be confiscated. Organizations that earn over 10,000 yuan in illegal income will be fined 5 to 10 times the total figure of their unlawful income, and those with illegal incomes of below 10,000 yuan will be fined between 10,000 and 50,000 yuan.

CITS Enters Overseas Travel Field

By Zhang Le

Starting July 10, China International Travel Service (CITS) has begun offering overseas travel services for foreign business inspections, cultural exchanges, study and training, outside of pure tourism, through the newly established CITS Outbound and Inbound Travel Service Corporation.

CITS is the first of the around 900 travel agencies in the country to offer these kinds of overseas travel services.

The establishment and formal approval of CITS Outbound and Inbound Travel Service is intended to stem illegal travel done under the auspices of overseas business inspections or cultural exchange.

Previously, five government ministries and bureaus were in charge of outbound travel, their jurisdictions divided according to the purpose of the trips overseas.



Students made up the majority of customers at the IVNT Internet cafe near Renmin University yesterday afternoon.

Photo by Chen Shuyi

Thirty Internet Cafes Reopen After One Month of Checks

By Shan Jinliang

After having their doors closed for almost a month, 30 licensed Beijing cyber cafes reopened yesterday after passing qualification checks.

A *Beijing Today* reporter visited IVNT Internet cafe near Renmin University yesterday, finding around half-full at 2pm. A poster was hung on the cafe's door that read: "No surfing of illegal websites."

These 30 establishments were the first of the 2,400 Internet bars in the capital to reopen following the arson tragedy at the Lanjisu Cyber Cafe on June 16, in which 25 young people died and 13 were badly burned. Reports in *People's Daily* have said that 2,200 of all the cyber cafes in the city used to operate illegally.

Following Beijing's ban on the operation of cyber cafes, the Chinese Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Infor-

mation Industry and the State Administration of Industry and Commerce launched a nationwide inspection of Internet cafes, focusing on the middle-ground between rural and urban areas. As part of the campaign, which will last from July 1 to August 31, all Internet cafes must re-register before October 1.

The 30 cafes that resumed business on Wednesday signed a joint public statement, in which their owners vowed to refuse entry to customers under the age of 18, to ban smoking and to operate no earlier than 8am and no later than 12pm every day.

Added safety measures required at the businesses include the removal of fixed barriers that can prevent access to exits, keeping doors and windows unlocked, and the installation of safety facilities such as fire control equipment. Noisy behavior, gambling and violent electronic games have

been forbidden.

The joint statement also says the cafes' computers have been equipped with computer security management software to filter out unhealthy information and that one security worker will be employed to monitor at most every 50 computers in each cafe.

In addition, the Beijing municipal government has opened a special post address, telephone number and website for the public to report illegally operating Internet cafes and for the supervision of the reopened cafes.

Residents who report illegal Internet cafes or illegal acts at the just-reopened cafes will receive rewards after their reports are confirmed. The Beijing Bureau of Culture's hotline for making reports is 66038047, the Beijing Bureau of Culture's is 65249006, and the Bureau of Industry and Commerce's is 12315.

(Source: Xinhuanet)

Foreign Banks Fight Allegations of Fee Adjustment

By Shan Jinliang/Wang Haijin

Executives of the US-based Citibank have flatly denied allegations made in a report published in *International Financial News* on July 11 that said the bank adjusted its deposit fees before its arrival in China, and its protests have been echoed by Hong Kong-based banks HSBC, Standard Charter Bank and the Bank of East Asia.

These four foreign banks make up the first group of banks approved to operate in China this year, following the country's accession to the World Trade Organization last November.

"The 0.25% processing fee charged when consumers withdraw US dollars has been in place since Citibank began offering foreign currency services to Chinese clients this March," said Guo Ye, manager of Public Affairs of the bank, "It is not a recent adjustment."

Since Citibank launched the above business in its Shanghai branch Puxi sub-branch on March 21, it has maintained its 0.25% fee collection standard and policy of charging a fee of 100 yuan (\$12) on single-day deposits that total less than \$100,000 and 50 yuan (\$6) on deposits that add up to less than \$5,000.

Zhang Dandan, spokesperson for HSBC, told *Beijing Youth Daily* on July 11 the bank will maintain its standard service charge of \$20 per half year on accounts with deposits of less than \$2,000 and the 0.25% fee on foreign currency withdrawal. "There are crowds in our branches in Beijing and in Shanghai, meaning market response to our services has been strong and our clients can accept our fee standards," she added.

According to Zhang, because of its relatively small number of branches and employees in the Chinese mainland, HSBC mainly focuses on how to meet the needs of each individual client instead of lowering fees to attract more customers.

Chinese Passenger Loses Suit to Dutch Airline

By Ivy Zhang/Shan Jinliang

A passenger who felt Dutch Royal Airlines should inform him in Chinese that his luggage was overweight failed to plead a convincing case in the second trial of his lawsuit against the airline heard on July 10 at the Beijing No. 2 Intermediate People's Court.

Liu Chi, chief legal consultant to Caterpillar China Investment, purchased a Beijing-Paris round trip ticket from the airline on February 12, 1999. On March 3, 1999, Liu was to fly back on the airline's flight KL 1264 to Beijing.

When checking in his luggage, Liu was told the maximum weight that could be carried for free was 20 kilograms, but his luggage weighed in at 50 kilograms. After negotiations, the airline charged Liu 2,075 francs for 10 kilograms of excess luggage weight.

Liu raised a stink over the overweight charges after returning to China, and failed to reach an agreement with the airline after repeated bargaining.

In March last year, Liu filed a case with the Beijing Chaoyang District People's Court, alleging the airline did not inform him in Chinese of the luggage weight limit, which infringed his right to be informed as a customer and caused him economic losses.

Liu petitioned the court to request the airline rescind the overweight charge and compensate him for the interest he could have received on the money and his legal and other fees.

Following the failure of his first case in August last year, Liu appealed the case to a higher court, Beijing No.2 Intermediate People's Court, where his charges were also rejected.

The court ruled that because the luggage weight limit was indicated in English on Liu's air ticket, the airline did its duty in notifying passengers in a way recognized by Chinese civil aviation authorities.

The court suggested Dutch Royal Airlines add Chinese language notices to inform Chinese passengers of issues like luggage weight limits, but said the airline's failure to do so was not illegal.

After the ruling was announced, Liu Chi's lawyer, Li Jing-sheng, said, "We have already achieved our goal of raising Dutch Royal Airlines' awareness of Chinese consumers."

Li added, however, that customers' rights to be informed have yet to be fully realized. "Businesses have the obligation to tell consumers about their products and their products' contents, which requires not only providing information but making sure consumers understand the information," he said, "As an overseas airline operating in China, does writing notices in English constitute protecting the rights of Chinese consumers to be informed?"

A report run in *China Youth Daily* on Monday attributed Liu's loss in the case to a lack of relevant domestic laws. China's Product Quality Law addresses consumers' rights to be informed by requiring product names, producer names and production locations be marked in Chinese characters on products.

According to the report, the judge overseeing the case said Dutch Royal Airlines' services cannot be categorized as products, meaning there are no laws that directly support Chinese passengers' interests.

By Zhang Le

Local businesspeople will gain access to credit information on their business partners for the first time tomorrow with the launch of Beijing Credit Management Corp.

The opening of the company is another step in the establishment of a credit system in the capital following the trial implementation of a credit system by Zhongguancun Science Park last December and the enterprise credit search system being prepared for launch in September by the Beijing Bureau of Industry and Commerce.

Beijing Credit Management will help facilitate the formation of a full-scale credit monitoring system and is aimed at being able to hold and provide credit informa-

tion about every resident and company in the city.

A *Beijing Evening News* report of last week said the company would play a key role in keeping potential defrauders in line as an impartial and independent third party.

Beijing Credit Management was co-funded by Beijing State-owned Assets Management Corp., Capital Information Corp., the Beijing Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Service Center and Zhongguancun Hi-tech Insurance Corp, with 20 million yuan in registered capital.

Wu Bo, general manager of the company said, "We have started to collect credit information on both individuals and companies from municipal bureaus, commissions

Profits Appear for SOHU

By Yang Xiao

SOHU.COM (Nasdaq: SOHU), China's best known Internet portal, reported its second quarter results Wednesday. The report shows the company achieved positive earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization - two quarters ahead of the company's own earnings projections; positive cash flow from operations; a record revenue growth of 35 percent and gross margins reaching 49 percent.

"This historic quarter underscores SOHU's outstanding ability to translate the potential of the dynamic Chinese Internet market into positive returns," said Charles Zhang, CEO of SOHU.

SOHU's US\$3.36 million advertising revenues for the second quarter were up 34 percent from \$2.51 million in the first quarter, beating company predictions by \$0.56 million. Advertising revenue gross margins reached an unprecedented high of 56 percent, up from 42 percent in the first quarter.

The World Cup was instrumental in strengthening the base of online advertising, allowing SOHU to reach all-time high advertising revenues. The company continues to reap the benefits of educating Chinese companies about the value of online advertising. Domestic advertising clients provided an 81 percent share of advertising revenue.

SOHU's business strategy of monetizing its vast user base continued to pay off, with non-advertising revenues contributing 45 percent of total revenues in the second quarter.

"Building a successful business in the Chinese Internet industry no longer relies exclusively on the online advertising market. Via both PC and wireless devices, SOHU's users have become customers for paid services. For our short messaging products we are targeting the market of 160 million mobile phone users. For our SOHU E-Store we are targeting 60 million current Internet users. In Q3 of this year we will further expand our consumer businesses with the official launch of SOHUSTock.com, an online securities trading web site, and our latest venture SOHU Online, an all-in-one platform for Internet access and content," said Zhang.



Zhang, "we can expect to see real profits next year." Photo by Yang Xiao

Chinese and Korean Banks Team Up

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and the Korea Exchange Bank (KEB) of the Republic of Korea signed an agreement of all-round business cooperation Monday in a move the two sides said would allow them to offer more financial services to their clients.

A spokesman for ICBC said the agreement covers remittance, crediting, credit card, information exchange and other business areas. According to the agreement, the ICBC and the KEB will offer favorable conditions to each other's clients when providing them with loans in local currency.

In individual financial services, the ICBC and the KEB will offer favorable exchange rates to cardholders of the other bank when they change foreign currency or draw cash. In addition, clients of one bank can use the other bank's services in money remittance.

Founded in 1967, the KEB is one of South Korea's largest commercial banks, and is the first South Korean bank to enter the Chinese market. (Xinhua)

McDonald's launches rice menu

Following KFC, McDonald's has unveiled a new product category in Hong Kong - two rice dishes.

The fast food giant hopes the rice menu will suit the dietary habits of Hong Kongers, for whom rice is a staple food, according to a press released Tuesday.

The two rice dishes are grilled chicken with rice and mushroom sauce and chicken cutlet with rice and curry sauce. Both are made with Japanese pearl rice cooked with a savory broth and served with crispy fresh broccoli. (Xinhua)

FINANCE

Disputes over Non-Performing Rate

Ernst & Young report challenges government statistics

By Yang Xiao

According to a report, titled *Ernst & Young Asia 2002 Non-performing Loans*, says non-performing rate of China's four biggest state-owned banks is 34 percent, 10 percent higher than the figure given by the People's Bank of China.

China Construction Bank is one of the four state-owned banks referred to in the report. An officer of the bank's public relations department, who declined to be named, told *Beijing Today*, "We just announced our non-performing rate had fallen to 13.2 percent by the end of June. The gap between foreign views and the central bank stems from calculation methods. I don't know what method Ernst & Young adopted for its report. The People's Bank of China recognizes two methods, and it uses one method - an internationally recognized five-category system for loan classification - that calculated the four biggest banks' average non-performing rate at 24.5 percent in April. We use another method that gives a result much lower than the central bank's statistics."

The central bank has ordered the banks to lower the non-performing level three percent annually, to achieve a target of 15 percent by 2005. An announcement published Monday said the China Construction Bank's non-performing loans had decreased by \$1.8 billion, and the non-performing rate dropped by 1.71 percentage points

to 13.2 percent.

Besides the China Construction Bank, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China announced last Tuesday that in the first six months, the bank lowered its non-performing loans by \$2.7 billion or 2.28 percentage points.

State-owned banks are strengthening a strict approach to limit new loans. According to Wu Xiaoling, vice governor of the People's Bank of China, all banks rule that if a newly approved loan goes bad, the responsible employees will be punished. Therefore employees must find zero risk credibility projects to grant loans. Through this approach the bad loans can be gradually diluted.

Ernst & Young concedes that the method it adopts counts on the asset management companies' switched bad loans. This method, used extensively in the west, has proved unpopular in almost all Asian economies. Ernst & Young analyzes that the global recession, constantly changing government policies and inflexible banking systems have all led to the accumulation of bad loans.

The report reveals that the initiative that sells \$480 billion bad loans to international investors halted due to lack of relevant laws to protect potential buyers. The law on bankruptcy contains some bugs that private enterprises cannot work around, forcing debtors to choose not so transparent approach to acquire their assets. Besides, court's verdicts are sometimes not enforced. In addition, some foreign investors may find it impossible to repatriate hard currencies from China, the report pointed out.

Despite various challenges, the central bank is sticking to its own interpretation of non-performing rates. China central bank chief Dai Xianglong said in January the combined non-performing loan ratio of the Big Four state banks stood at 24.5 percent in 2001, down 3.8 percentage points from 2000. Although some western media reported Dai as saying that bad loans of big state banks were higher than official estimates and could be up to 30 percent of their total lending. But the figure was still lower than some western

estimates of up to 50 percent.

China has already transferred \$310 billion in non-performing loans to four debt-clearing firms set up in 1999; a move analysts said helped cut the non-performing loans ratio by 10-20 points, of which about \$11.3 billion has so far been disposed of and \$4.5 billion has been recovered.

But the asset management companies still have been less successful in recovering the debts and reforming the ailing state firms that failed to repay, according to analysts. Some even say most of the debts would eventually have to be written off, though some local officials maintain 30-40 percent can be recovered.

Non-performing loans are a major barrier to the four banks being listed on the stock exchange. The publication of the Ernst & Young report coincides with the Bank of China (Hong Kong)'s international road show for the IPO, which is intended to raise \$3 billion.

In the run-up for the listing, set for July 25, Bank of China (Hong Kong) has sought to distinguish itself from its mainland parent, which is burdened with bad loans in both domestic and international branches.

Cleaning up its books ahead of the listing, the Hong Kong unit has transferred billions of dollars of its own non-performing loans to the asset management company set up by the parent bank and written off hundreds of millions more.



Dai Xianglong maintained the combined non-performing loan ratio of the Big Four state banks stood at 24.5 percent in 2001.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

IT Giant Stumbles

Legend Retreats from Internet Business

By Zhao Yijiang

Al but four of Beijing Legend Yestock's several hundred employees were dismissed this month, according to *Economic Observer*. The company, once seen as Legend Holding's key foothold in its attempt to break into the Internet industry, has shut its doors.

Aggressive investments on dotcoms

On April 18, 2000, Legend announced a major business reshuffle, switching from information technology products to network technology and information services with the launch of Internet portal FM365.com. The company aimed to make the website one of the largest portals in China within a year.

"Leveraging our leadership position in the Chinese mainland computer market, Legend will put more effort into developing our FM365 portal. Our target is to establish FM365 as one of the largest portals in the market, with 8 million hits a day," Legend chairman Liu Chuanzhi said at the time.

Overwhelmed by the apparent opportunities for dotcoms, Legend quickly found that the HK\$200 million originally earmarked for the project was not enough. "We can't miss any opportunities," Liu said in the Internet booming period, "There are many bargains on the market." Education and finance were chosen by Legend as the two main focuses of its Internet development strategy.

On August 22, 2000, Legend Group announced the purchase of 40 percent of the stock shares of Yestock.com, China's first security trading and mobile e-commerce website. The acquisition cost Legend US\$35 million (approximately HK\$276 million) including US\$16 million in cash.

The education sector was another major area of emphasis for Legend's Internet business. In cooperation with the renowned education institution, the Affiliated High School of Peking University, Legend built a site for primary and secondary distance learning. The company also invested 50 million yuan to set up a company named Beijing Liandong Weiye Technology Development in December 2000 in partnership with New Oriental



"Education and stock trading are not areas we have expertise in," said Yang Yuanqing.

Photos by Photocome

School, an English teaching organization that holds over 70 percent of the English training market in China.

The retreat

When the Internet bubbles started to burst in 2000, Legend began reconsidering its Internet strategy. It sealed a contract with AOL for a joint venture in June 2001 to use the US Internet service provider's operating mode. The joint venture, with each side pledging to commit US\$100 million, was to earn revenue from fees for its technical support and services to Legend FM365. The tie-up was seen as a boon to FM365. Now FM365 has become merely a customer service website for Legend PC users, after burning more than 100 million yuan in the last two years. The company had to fire eighty percent of its staff in FM365, with only twenty remaining at the end of last year.

The acquisition of Yestock received a vote of no confidence from the market, with dotcom shares nose-diving shortly after the announcement. Legend responded by closing all Yestock

subsidiaries and decreasing its stake in both e-learning, despite its potentially profitable future, and e-stock websites.

Web gamble: few win

The Internet is a gamble that is generating few winners and lots of losers. The rule holds true even for the giants. The failure of Legend in its Internet foray has many reasons.

First of all, the group was not well prepared for the new business, which was driven by the euphoria over the Internet at the time. "Industry trends pushed us to change direction," Liu admitted. It is a general rule in any new businesses that most start-ups will eventually be sacrificed to cultivate the market in favor of stronger companies.

Secondly, Legend is a newcomer in the industry. Many netizens complained that FM365's content was unattractive. "Unlike SINA and SOHU, which are focusing on localizing services by setting up branch websites in major cities in China, FM365 has concentrated on its general website,

which has failed to lure customers," said William Shi, a market analyst based in Shanghai. The company is not familiar with finance and education either. "Education and stock trading are not areas we have expertise in," said Yang Yuanqing, executive director of Legend.

Thirdly, the "loyalty factor" proved less significant than the firm anticipated. As China's number one PC vendor, Legend had added online access function for some PCs to its website. However, it only succeeded in retaining three customers out of ten as interactive service users after seven to thirteen months of trial use, according to insiders.

There is no doubt that Internet is the direction of the future; the problem is how to benefit from it. "We will continue to integrate useful Internet resources proactively and seamlessly to provide effective and proper services to customers," Yang said at the Third High-Level Forum on City Informationization in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Country on Right Track to Economic Growth

By Zhao Hongyi

This week, the central government reported the national gross domestic product (GDP) increased 7.8 percent in the first half of the year, and predicted an average growth rate of 7.5 percent for the whole year. Despite this strong showing, officials also warned of a slight slow down in the next six months and called for an overall upgrading of the domestic manufacturing industry.

The State Development Planning Commission revealed the figures in an economic evaluation report at the end of last week, followed by a press conference held by the State Statistics Bureau on Monday. The State Economic and Trade Development Commission briefed Tuesday on the country's manufacturing, textile and garments, and petrochemical industries.

China's GDP reached 4.56 trillion yuan in the first half of the year, of which agriculture industry, called the country's "first industry", accounted for 463 billion yuan, a 2.6 percent increase, the manufacturing industry, the "second industry", made up 2.51 trillion, up 9.6 percent, and the "third industry", the service sector, hit 1.58 trillion yuan, a 6.6 percent increase. Exports and domestic demand were the two major forces behind the growth.

Economists and research institutes, domestic and foreign, have accepted the figures. Reuters, in a report released this month, predicted the country's annual economic growth rate to be 7.6-7.7 percent. The International Monetary Fund predicted in its World Economic Outlook in early April that economic growth rate in China would

be about 7 percent in 2002 and 7.4 percent in 2003. IMF said the ongoing progress with economic structural readjustment and handling rising fiscal challenges will be key to sustaining strong growth in China.

However, the state planning commission's report warns of a slowdown of the consumption increase, saying a decline of the general price index reflects a possible rise of deflation. The report says a slowing of investment demand and export growth is possible in the next six months.

The report suggests the central government use increasing employment and domestic consumption as two major tools to curb possible currency deflation.

The economic and trade commission forwarded that the country's industrial output increases are based on quantity, rather than

quality, and recommended an overall upgrading of the country's industrial quality.

Regarding the rumors saying the Chinese official figures are exaggerating, Ji Xiaonan, director general of the research bureau of the commission, said that first, the Chinese government adopts international practices in collecting the figures, and makes every effort to avoid fraud in reporting, and secondly, a huge number of private enterprises have under-reported their outputs and incomes in order to evade taxation.

"Third, facts are the strongest evidence," added Ji, "The rapid and continued increase in taxation income, customs' tariff income, and the rise of Chinese people's standard of living should quiet all doubts and suspicious of the figures."

Gold Links China and South Africa

By A Yi

South Africa, the world's largest producer of gold, signed an agreement promising to cooperate with China in gold detection, exploration and refining at the "China-South Africa Gold Technology and Equipment Cooperation & Trading and Investment Forum" held last month in Zhaoyuan, Shandong province.

Cooperation includes environmental protection, production safety, and project financing.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade of South Africa led a delegation consisting of representatives from thirty enterprises to the forum.

China produced 118 tons of gold last year, making it the fourth largest producer in the international market. The country still far trails South Africa, which has a maximum annual gold output of 1,000 tons.

Last November, in what has been widely regarded as the first step in China opening its gold market to the world, the Shanghai Gold Exchange started pilot operation, providing a forum for international gold trade in the country.

ETS Grants Topeak English Training, Testing Rights

By A Yi

Many rumors contain some truth, just like the one that passed through the mill earlier this year that US Educational Testing Service (ETS) had the idea of diversifying its testing business by seeking out a number of local partners, thereby breaking its exclusive partnership with Oriental English School. Six months later, on July 9, ETS signed a partnership agreement with Beijing Topeak International Education Investment Co., granting Topeak rights to use ETS' practical English testing programs in China.

The two companies will cooperate to launch the first standardized test of practical English in China designed specially for the needs of domestic businesses in improving their English language communication skills.

ETS is the sole operator of the TOEFL, GRE and GMAT tests, which are key to the growing ranks of the Chinese hoping to study in the US.

Oriental English School is a private test preparation language school with courses specifically tailored to the TOEFL, GRE and GMAT tests. Last year, ETS filed a lawsuit against Oriental for the illegal use and reproduction of its training course materials and test samples. Earlier this year, ETS allowed Oriental to use these programs in China for an annual fee.

Beijing Topeak, which has its origins in China's booming real estate industry, is working to diversify its business, and education is one field in which it sees great potential.

Cuba Buys Telecom Gear from Great Dragon

By A Yi

The Electronics Group of Cuba signed an agreement this week with China's Great Dragon Information Technology Corporation to buy telecommunications network switch exchangers, optical telecommunications equipment, other optical products, and broadcast and television systems from the domestic company. The total purchasing value amounts \$66 million.

Great Dragon is a telecommunications company whose products range from fixed telecommunication systems to mobile systems. The company has engaged in business with Cuba for a couple of years and established a joint venture with the Electronics Group of Cuba with a total investment of over \$200 million, aiming at updating the country's public telecommunication system.

Fund Management Supervision: Mission Possible?

By Zhao Hongyi

The Chinese government allows foreign investors to hold comparatively majority shares in Sino-foreign joint fund management ventures, but prevents any investor, domestic or foreign, to operate more than two funds in the country. Last week, the China Security Regulatory Commission delivered its explanation of the official regulations over such joint ventures issued in early June, confirming these two critical points.

The commission stressed that no foreign investor can hold a stake of over 33 percent in any single fund, but promised that number will increase to 49 percent in three years. No single investor can be engaged in more than two funds or hold comparatively majority shares in more than one fund.

The regulation requires a minimum registered capital of 300 million yuan to start a fund. Fund management employees, whether Chinese or foreign, should meet the commission's testing criteria before officially starting their jobs.

Business analysts say that the commission's regulation aims at protecting the benefits of individual investors, those individuals who invest cash in funds. However, they also warn of difficulties in implementing the regulations.

"Business, particularly financial business, is really difficult to supervise," a business analyst who requested anonymity told *Beijing Today*, "The best solution is self-discipline by business operators themselves."

There are eleven fund management companies operating in the country, most of which are spin-offs of securities transaction companies. These 100-percent domestically-funded management companies run five open-end funds and 49 close-end funds, 24 of which are traded on the Shanghai Stock Exchange and 25 on the Shenzhen Stock Exchanges.

Foreign capital has yet to enter.

Sources from the commission say at least seven applications have been filed for the approval of funds run as joint businesses with foreign partners. Among the foreign applicants are the International Financial Corporation, BNP Paribas of France, the Allianz Group of Germany, UBS AG from Switzerland, the Bank of Montreal from Canada, and JP Morgan of the US.



The new Pressto outlet in Beijing provides the Press Toke (tailoring and alteration services) and Press Piel (cleaning of leather, fur, and delicate clothing) complementary services.

Photo by Zhuang Jian

Like Magic, It's Pressto

By Xiao Ma

The heat, dust and humidity of the Beijing summer can make keeping clothes clean no easy chore. Now city residents have a new choice for keeping their clothes neat and pressed, as Pressto, a dry cleaning chain store group from Spain, has made its first foray into the massive China market with the opening of its debut outlet in June in the capital.

Six years after the establishment of its first dry-cleaning outlet in Spain, Pressto now operates 434 outlets in nine countries, covering Europe, America and Africa. The company claims it will bring the new concept of one-hour quality dry cleaning service, the quickest in the world, to the capital

of the world's most populous country.

The company is not the first foreign dry cleaner to arrive in China, as pioneers including France-based Fornet have been providing dry cleaning services in China for several years.

Following the opening of its pilot shop in the Fuxing shopping center on Chang'an Avenue, Pressto is determined to open two more shops in Beijing and Hong Kong that will serve as centers for the training of local employees later this year. Shanghai and Tianjin are the next targets for the establishment of outlets in the first leg of the company's expansion.

Opening of Credit Guarantee Market Unheralded

By Xiao Ma

While China is opening its financial market to competition from abroad since its WTO accession in November last year, several credit guarantee ventures have been set up on the mainland, but their openings have generally flown under the public radar.

Credit-Added Guarantee (Shenzhen) Co. is one example. Fully owned by the Credit-Added (Hong Kong) Group, Credit-Added Guarantee (Shenzhen) was established on March 15 this year. Aside from offering credit guarantee services, the company also

aims at helping its customers make investment decisions through asset evaluation and investment appraisal services.

At the very beginning of this year, the Bank of American and a Hong Kong investor injected \$27 million into Shenzhen Orienwise Guarinvest Co., a formerly 100-percent-Chinese-owned credit guarantee company.

Both credit guarantee companies locked their target customers in small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up around 90 percent of the businesses in the country.

Wang Qiang, director general for manage-

ment of Orienwise Guarinvest, told *Beijing Youth Daily* earlier this week that credit guarantee services have yet to become a mature, independent, sophisticated and profitable business sector in China.

"But we are quite optimistic that we won't have any strong competitors within the next three to five years," he added.

Sources say Orienwise Guarinvest is preparing for a public listing on Nasdaq, which could bring in an estimated \$61 million cash for the company, enabling it to extend its reach in the opening domestic market.

Silence Broken with Uncovering of Secrets of Microsoft Deal



Steve Ballmer met press in Beijing June 26.

By Zhao Hongyi

When Microsoft's Steve Ballmer signed an agreement with China's State Development Planning Commission (SDPC) on June 26 in Beijing, pledging to invest \$750 million in China in the next three years, no one knew the details of the deal, nor did many want to know. Most believed the agreement was a mere marketing ploy.

They were wrong.

Yet it was not really their fault, as neither Microsoft nor SDPC made any details privy at the time. At the press conference held in Beijing the day after the signing, Ballmer said the agreement covers a "wide variety of fronts: outsourcing, exports, local training, development, just to name a few." SDPC refused to answer any inquiries.

After two weeks of digging, Chinese papers, including the Beijing-based *Economic Observer*, uncovered some fragments of the agreement's contents that fit together to give us a picture.

Outsourcing of hardware and software products to China

Microsoft pledged to purchase \$700 million worth of software and hardware products from China in the next three years.

Training of software management professionals

Microsoft will spend 150 million yuan in the next three years to educate and train domestic senior software engineering and framework management professionals. The company is including China in its global senior professional training program already under way in 11 countries and regions, and will support Chinese software scholars in visiting and studying in foreign countries.

Introducing management techniques through joint ventures and business cooperation

In the 1990s, Microsoft drew criticism from the Chinese government for operating completely independently and limiting its business to only the sales of software prod-

ucts. In the new deal, Microsoft promised to engage in the development of China's software industry and spend \$25 million in the next two years and \$75 million in the next three towards this goal by creating joint ventures and cooperating with local partners.

Accelerating the pace of technology transfer

The software giant pledged to spend 100 million yuan to set up a number of joint research institution with Chinese ventures, academies and scientific research institutions, and plans to sell software products developed by the Beijing-based Microsoft Research Asia.

Sharing software codes

In the past, Microsoft launched a global "codes sharing initiative" to provide opportunities for governments and enterprises in 30 countries and regions to read and share the codes for its products. It has now included China among this privileged group.

(Sina Photo)

End of Heatwave is Nigh

By Sun Ming

First, sudden squalls. Then intermittent drizzle. Next, the heatwave. Now new to Beijing — swarms of locusts.

They appeared like stormclouds above the city skyline on Saturday. Some were even sighted in a KFC on the Northwest Third Ring Road.

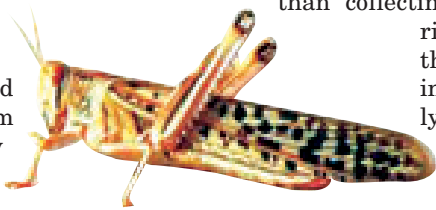
"Thousands appeared on the pavement, trees and dustbins," Fengtai District resident Wang Wei told *Beijing Youth Daily*. "I really don't know how so many locusts can appear overnight."

Their arrival has a direct connection to the high temperatures, said Zhang Long, a professor from China Agriculture University. Beijing hit 41.1 degrees Centigrade on Sunday — not just the highest temperature this year, but also a July record for the last 40 years.

"It's comfortable for locusts living in such hot weather," said Zhang, "and the air currents allow them to fly to Beijing more easily on the wind."

"But I've never encountered such a phenomenon in 20 years."

These are not migratory locusts, Zhang added, but their harmless Asian cousins. Whatever. They sure taste finger-lickin' good. City folks here enjoy nothing more than collecting buckets of the glorified grasshoppers and then deep frying them into a crunchy pre-apocalyptic snack. Next week's recipe — frogs.



Big Bird Swoops to Save German

By Jiao Pei

China's first air ambulance has made its maiden flight, rescuing a German traveler in trouble in rural Gansu.

International SOS Beijing received a call from a German insurance company requesting assistance for a customer in serious medical trouble in Luqu County, Gannan Tibetan Minority Autonomous Region.

The woman — identified only as "Ms. Graf" by the insurance company — required transport to Beijing. Lanzhou Military Area Hospital medical staff transported her to Lanzhou Airport at 4pm, July 11. Graf was moved by slippery track into the Deer Jet custom-made medical plane and at 6:30pm, the plane arrived at Beijing International Airport.

Graf was whisked to Peking Union Hospital where her condition was diagnosed as pancreatitis. She has since made a full recovery and is continuing her travels.

"Before this air rescue service was launched, we transported patients by charter plane," said John Williams, Managing Director, International SOS China. "Medical staff had to carry equipment and sometimes there was no spare plane for emergencies."

Travelers who buy travel insurance with assistance can access the company's medical hotline services, medical evacuation and overseas medical assistance, said Williams. When asked the price, he said most customers had insurance.

"Of course individuals can also enjoy this service. The price depends and is relatively high."

Companies including China Life Insurance, China Ping An Insurance and Xin Hua Life Insurance have obtained discounts, said Duan Fangxiao, business development manager of SOS China.

SOS Air Rescue: 6462 9027 (24 hours daily).



Green Bottles Standing by a Wall

Wang Jianguan adopts an unorthodox and potentially wasteful approach to bottles of Yanjing. Wang was one of eight Guinness World Record holders who wowed tourists at Badaling Great Wall on Saturday.

photo by Fan Jiwen

Water Power Station Claims 2 More Victims

By Ivy Zhang

A Beijinger's wife and his 5-year-old daughter were swept away to their deaths when a sudden gush of water was released by a hydro-electric power station last Sunday.

Lang Rangtao found the body of his 32-year-old wife, Wang Haiyan, about 2 kilometers downstream the same day. Three days later, Lang Lan's body was located at a nearby rock.

No signs warn visitors of the sudden swells in the vicinity where the accident occurred.

"We take no responsibility!" Mr. Ding, power station chief told Lang and *Beijing Times* reporter Qu Hongyan. "We are not responsible for the water running outside the station."

"As to how much water is released and when it is released, we take orders from the North China Power Group."

About 2 pm, July 7, Sunday, Lang Rongtao, along with his wife, daughter and two friends, drove to Mentougou district in west Beijing to escape the heat.

Driving along a nearly-dry waterway about 40 meters wide in the Yanchi area, they stopped and went down for some fun.

"At that time, there was little water in it," Lang said.

Lang and one of his friends walked to one bank and his wife and daughter were about 20 meters away on the other side.

"Suddenly, I heard my friend on the bank shouting, 'the water is rising'. I turned back and saw

the water had reached knee-high on my daughter."

Lang plunged into the water, but before he got there, his wife and daughter — who could not swim — had been washed away.

"The water was 'boiling'. I swam about 100 meters and the water was getting stronger," Lang said, "I knew I could not reach them and then I struggled to make it back to the bank."

Lang's family are not the first victims.

"Such accidents happen every year, but Lang is the only one who intends to fight for justice," said Li, a police officer Yongdinghe Police Station.

"Others just accepted the fact and went home quietly."

Local villagers say the Xia-

malting hydrostation located in the upper stream releases water almost every day at irregular times. No warning is given in advance. The release on July 7 was the largest in recent years.

"It has nothing to do with us," said Ding, whose full name was not identified in the article.

"Many people have been washed away and you are the first to come to us. You can go anywhere to sue us."

"Whenever water goes out of the station, it is under the jurisdiction of the Yongdinghe waterway management office."

The Yongdinghe waterway management office and North China Power Group also declined any responsibility for the accident, Lang said.

Chinese LG Loses Landmark Lawsuit — to South Korean LG

By Shan Jinliang

Chinese company Lan Guang, known as "LG" in China, has lost its record lawsuit against the Korean company LG Industrial and LG Electronics.

The 100-million-yuan defeat at Beijing Higher People's Court in

Xuanwumen on July 11 represents the biggest ever loss in China for a company in a trademark suit.

Beijing Lan Guang Corporation successfully applied for its "LG plus graph" trademark for its elevators at the Trademark Bureau under the State Admin-

istration of Industry and Commerce on August 10, 1991.

South Korea's LG Industrial and LG Electronics began selling elevators in the Chinese mainland in 1997. Lan Guang alleged the Korean "LG" trademark was too similar to the Chinese and violat-

ed its registered trademark.

But in a court announcement, the judge said he found no similarity to exist between the first letters of the Chinese "Lan Guang (blue light)", its pinyin name "Lan Guang" and the "LG" used by the two South Korean companies.

Tourists Trapped in Train from Hell

By Lily Li

About 500 passengers were packed into two train carriages for three hours on Sunday, the hottest day of the year.

Most were returning from the Yesanpo tourist resort.

"The carriage was sweltering and name it was very difficult to breathe," said Xu, a Laiyuan-Beijing passenger, "far below the standard of an air-conditioned train."

Conductors finally informed passengers of the unthinkable — the air-conditioning had bro-

ken. "The conductors' carefree attitude was annoying," said Xu. "It's our right to expect air conditioning. We paid 20 yuan for a ticket which includes 12 yuan allocated to an air-conditioned service."

Panicking people tried to transfer carriages, but there was little or no extra space on the train.

"Dozens of passengers packed into the toilet to wet their towels and handkerchiefs and wipe the sweat away. Many used books and newspaper as fans," said Xu,

a high-tech company worker.

"But it was all in vain. The older people suddenly began to have heart trouble and a 5-month-old baby suffered sun stroke."

After alighting at Beijing South station, outraged passengers remained at the platform demanding justice. An hour later, controller Liu Jian appeared.

As passengers clustered around him shouting "Ticket refund! Ticket refund!" Liu insisted rules were rules. He

apologized, saying regrettably, no refund was possible.

But the passengers did not budge, continuing to demand a full refund and a more sincere apology. Half an hour later, Liu and passengers' representatives emerged from his office.

Liu made a public apology and refunded the ticket costs to the remaining passengers, of whom about a third had stayed.

"We weren't in it for the 20 yuan, but for simple justice," said Zhang Lei, a Beijing University student, afterwards.



This dog was taken to Qiliqu pound

Photo by Wang Haixin

Police Snatch Unregistered Dogs

By Lu Guoqiang/Zhu Lin

In a 5am raid, 30 city police swooped down on the Ximachang Community in Fengtai District last Friday.

They captured six dogs in two hours.

The operation kicked off at 06:00 hours. When owners out walking their dogs saw police coming, many scooped the pooches into their arms and made a break for cover. Other owners unleashed their unregistered dogs and shooed them away.

Dog lovers in the capital city must register their animals for 5,000 yuan in their first year of ownership and 2,000 yuan in subsequent years. The average monthly income of a Beijinger in 2002 was 1,058.8 yuan, according to the Beijing Statistics Bureau.

Sixty percent of dog-owning

families have registered their animals, according to *Beijing Star Daily*. Around 130,000 dogs were registered in the city last year.

"Mr. Li", a Fengtai District Public Security Bureau spokesman who refused to release his full name, said the bureau started the crackdown after receiving a complaint from a Ximachang resident.

Confiscated dogs are impounded in Qiliqu, Shahe Zhen in Changping County, northwest Beijing.

"The impounded dogs have people to take care of them," said Li.

"When unregistered dogs are caught, owners cannot get them back because they have broken the law," said a source at the Beijing Public Security Bureau, who refused to give her name.



Moon Man Lands

One of the last men on the moon set foot on something more down-to-earth at Badaling on Friday.

"I once saw the Great Wall from outer space during my lunar exploration," said retired astronaut Eugene A. Cernan. "I'm excited and proud that I can visit here with my own feet."

The 68-year-old was commander of Apollo 17, the last lunar landing on December 7-19, 1972.

(Chen Ying/Liu Ping)

Liu Zengrong, employee, Capital University of Economics and Business

After checking out the photos of *bangye* in *Beijing Youth Daily*, I wanted to take some photos of *bangye* by myself. I spent the whole afternoon of Saturday, June 16, tracking down and photographing them. When I told one *bangye* I wanted to take a photo of him, he refused. Maybe he felt embarrassed.

Through observation, I concluded that *bangye* appear most often at the outskirts of the city. This means this phenomenon is related to the environment and social atmosphere. In terms of occupation, most *bangye* are laborers, and in terms of character, *bangye* are informal people who care more about keeping cool and convenience. Of course, some *bangye* are students and teenagers.

Shi Haoran, sixth-grade student

I think *bangye* dress how they do because they are hot. I want to ask them whether taking off their shirts really makes them feel cooler. People can use fans when they feel hot. I will never stop getting after people who insist on taking their shirts off.

It's rude for people to dress, or not dress, this way. What will foreigners think if they see *bangye* when they come to China for the 2008 Olympics Games.

Clothing makers could have problems in summer too if many people decide not to wear anything on their upper bodies. Plus, sweating and not wearing a shirt makes people more likely to get insect bites.

People that really want to go around half naked should do so at home. Reporters have send some *bangye* T-shirts, so why are they still bare? Can't *bangye* put on shirts, since so many people are working so hard to persuade them to do so?

Cover Up that Gut!

Media persuades to keep their shirts on

By Chen Ying

Summer's rising temperatures have been marked by the return of a seasonal species in the city often seen but rarely documented, called *bangye* in Beijing slang.

Who are these less than elusive creatures? They are the bold, sometimes not so beautiful, Beijing men who publicly doff their tops to beat the heat. You've seen them squatting and chatting with friends along city *hutongs*, or alleyways, sitting over a hot meal in a restaurant, or chilling on a chair outside the stairs to their apartment. They

come in all shapes in sizes, ranging from the brazen that stroll around in mere shorts and slippers to the more shy that expose only their often voluminous stomachs by rolling up their tank tops or T-shirts.

Baring chests and guts has long been a tradition for dealing with the sweltering heat of Beijing summers. Now that habit has come under serious media scrutiny with the launch of a campaign by *Beijing Youth Daily* in early June, in which the paper is running pictures of *bangye* everyday. The paper's management has decided the half-clad men are an eyesore that present poor

images of themselves and this quickly-modernizing city.

Readers have sent in pictures snapped all over the city. Their efforts are rewarded with two T-shirts from the paper, one for the photographer, one for the subject, that read, "Beijing is more beautiful because of me."

Beijing Youth Daily has met resounding public response to the campaign in the form of piles of photos and letters, and its popularity has drawn the interest of other papers. The fate of the *bangye* hang in the balance. Opinions follow:



Photos: Some of the *bangye* exposed in *Beijing Youth Daily* since June 11.

Reader who requested anonymity

A Chinese saying goes that there are no gentlemen during hot weather. In summer, *bangye* pop up all over the country. Even Hong Kong has *bangye*, many of whom are deliverymen. Even in a cosmopolitan city like Hong Kong, I have never heard of suggestions of eliminating the *bangye* phenomenon.

Maybe western people are more informal than Chinese in some ways. There were many western *bangye* and even *bangnai* (women) in South Korea and Japan during the 2002 World Cup. In my mind, it's unnecessary to worry about what foreigners will think about *bangye* and if that will damage the image of Beijing.

Gary Pinnegar, hairdresser from England

When I was a young man before I came to China, I lived near the beach. Of course, every chance I got I went to the beach and took most of my clothes off. I like the sun.

Taking clothes off doesn't matter to me. People should take off if they feel hot. It's natural. Just be careful you don't get too much sun. Maybe wear sun block. Taking everything off is good. I think it's elegant.

It doesn't make any difference even for the Olympic Game 2008. At that time, everybody should take their clothes off for the Games.

I think Chinese people should not be so shy. Take your clothes off and enjoy the sun.

Photos by
Wang Xin / Lin Qing
Chen Shuyi / Ma Jiang
Zhou Mingxing / Ye Jin

Business Booster or Big Brother?

Community reputation file system at center of personal privacy controversy

By Tao Yuan/Chen Ying

In a move hailed by some as a step towards promoting business morality and branded as basically Orwellian by others, the country's first community credit and reputation file system was launched in the Xinhua district of Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, on March 20, according to a report run in *China Youth Daily* June 9.

The *Daily* report said the system, a database set up to allow individuals and companies to check on the reputations of potential business partners based on their personal and business records, is not only open to the public but also is free. After several months of efforts to gather records by the Xinhua district government, the database now includes over 20,000 pieces of information on local residents and businesses. The local government has set up 16 sites where residents can search the files.

The administrators of the system focused on basic information and positive and negative records held by the government on organizations including government departments and enterprises, and residents including individual businessmen and citizens over the age of 18.

Positive records include reports on good deeds, philanthropic acts, and excellent contributions to the economy, education, service, culture, public security, environment and management in the district. Negative records include reports on tax evasion, manufacturing and/

or selling fake products, defaulting on contracts and debts, intentionally not paying public service fees, damaging public facilities and participating in feudal or superstitious groups or other illegal organizations.

In the process of collecting information, records from the 29 government departments in charge of law enforcement and from local residential management committees were sent to the district spiritual and civilization office. Positive records will be permanently filed in the database, while the length of time negative records will be on file will be decided by their degree of seriousness, with a maximum posting time of seven years.

Whether or not this system infringes on personal privacy has become a topic of wide discussion. Opinions follow:

Ge Ruifang, director, public relations department, Xinhua District

I studied at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore from 1999 to 2000. In Singapore, no one enjoys special rights allowing them to break public regulations. I borrowed a book from the university's library, but didn't pay much attention to the due date. One month later, when I returned the book, I had to pay a fine. Although I tried to get out of it, the librarian would hear nothing of it.

In Singapore, as I know, mistakes like keeping a library book overdue go on public record, and they are so strict that it would be enough reason

for an airline to not issue a ticket to a customer trying to leave the country. So, I definitely had to pay the 25 Singapore dollar fine.

It is urgent for Xinhua district to set up this kind of system because its gross domestic product and taxes are the highest of Shijiazhuang's districts and counties. Furthermore, building a spiritual civilization can't be done just through sloganeering. The system can be a catalyst for the strengthening of credit and reputation protection.

Zhou Hanhua, researcher, Institute of Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

There is actually no legal regulation for the creation of such a reputation file system. But does that mean it is illegal? I don't think so. As a creative and reform-aimed move, it can be put into practice if only there is no conflict with the constitution and laws.

Careful investigations are a must in building a reputation system. Laws, on the basis of protecting personal rights, should be made to promote information exchange.

Another key point is who runs this kind of system. Information systems come under the umbrella of the service industry. So a credit information system like this should be built according to the rules of the market, meaning several could be created and the best will survive.

The government should set up normal information release systems as soon as possible to ensure everyone equal access to the infor-

mation.

Ma Jiangtao, lawyer, Dacheng Law Firm

This kind of credit system is more a product of moral judgment than law. In a credit-based society, publishing individual or corporate information is a kind of means instead of a goal.

As far as I know, foreign countries only set up information-publishing systems in the field of economics, they don't extend to every facet of people or corporations. But the amount of detail given should correspond to the different needs in different fields, as for instance, reputation is very important for accounting and law firms.

Chen Linlong, vice manager, venture capital management department, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China

As a community management electronic file system, the collection and release of information will inevitably be random and incomplete. I read the administrator's story of her personal experience in Singapore which inspired her to have the idea to create this system, but that was simply one person's experience, there are no grounds to take it as a universal experience.

I think it's improper to publish personal information without a person's permission. It infringes people's right to privacy. It will be difficult for the public to accept such a system if there isn't a truly authoritative administration

in charge of collecting and managing the data.

Li Yuanqi, professor, Law School, Renmin University of China

The system touches every aspect of people, companies and organizations. In fact, it evaluates all of them. Its range shouldn't be so wide, it has gone beyond the limits of just credit.

Personally, I think it's the duty for some government legal department to run such a system. It should be authoritative and cautious in releasing information. And there should be some restrictions about information published to keep it mainly focused on economic activities. Other information about daily life or political views shouldn't be categorized as reputation information.

Another key issue is the source of the positive and negative records. Where do administrators get their information and who selects what information will be used? The publication of bad records could do great damage to people and organizations in more than just the infringement of their privacy. There should be some standards for the selection of information.

Only information relates to law enforcement, such as records of administrative punishment, withdrawals of business or personal licenses and defaulting on loans, should be released. Residential management committees should not be considered reputable sources of information.

SOUND BITES

"The dominant number of HIV carriers and AIDS patients live in rural areas, and their knowledge about AIDS prevention and relevant laws is gravely inadequate."

— Xiao Donglou, an official from the Ministry of Public Health, speaking to students from medical schools nationwide that will go to rural areas in 10 provinces in the West and central parts of China during their summer vacation

"I know my son. I know my child isn't capable of this crazy stuff"

— Ann Iverson on Monday night after her son, NBA star Allen Iverson, burst into his cousin's apartment with a handgun and threatened two men

"I don't think it's a victory for the American people, for the ordinary people. I don't think it is a victory for my son, who gave his life."

— Gail Spann of Winfield, Alabama, the mother of the CIA officer killed in a Taliban prison uprising after interviewing John Walker Lindh, who is facing a maximum of 20 years in prison for serving as a Taliban soldier from around August to November 2001

By Chen Ying

Women managers size up advantages, disadvantages

Girls on Top Speak Out



By Su Wei

A national magazine survey into management stress last month managed to uncover not one new or challenging insight. But the 18-page Managers magazine survey of 1,224 managers luckily interviewed 392 women. In their opinions emerged a familiar — but important — assessment of the plight of working women in modern China.

Equality? What equality?

Almost all the surveyed female managers believe they are treated unfairly compared to their male colleagues. But the majority agree resigning remains their only effective protest against unequal treatment.

Although sexual discrimination has long been opposed by the Chinese government and “equal work, equal pay” regulations are stipulated by law, no specifics provide women with a legal foundation to fight unequal treatment.

Take pregnancy and maternity as an example.

Zhang Lan, 32, manager of a public relations department in a joint venture, says she still does not think about having children in the next three years.

“It was not my will that decides this,” she says. “My boss once told me he would not like to ask a pregnant woman to take flights visiting clients and promoting products.”

“I cannot sue my boss. He just gave me a hint, instead of a clear expression.”

Stereotypes linger

The idea that man holds the real power and is more capable than woman appears to persist in the minds of both sexes.

“I have worked for this company for over five years,” says Zhang. She says, “It’s not easy for me to become a department manager. I do not think that in a new company I would still have the same job.”

“I can still have a job during the pregnancy, which is protected by the Labour Law, but can my boss wait for everything to be solved during the three-month maternity leave?”

Other stereotypes can do even more damage.

“A woman in her 30s is like a withered flower, but a man makes his career in his 30s” is the maxim mouthed by most surveyed.

Wining, dining clients

The survey reveals most female managers have been troubled trying to strike a balance between their family and work-related social events.

They feel ashamed of not spending as much as time as other women with their children and husbands.

Socializing is often a job necessity, especially for managers and especially in China.

“I think female managers, especially those that already have a family and a child, must rearrange their entire social schedules,” says Gao Li, senior director of marketing, Pepsi, Shenzhen.

A director of Shenzhen Commercial Bank, Futian, concedes she sometimes re-

ally does not like a party, but she forces herself.

“I should not treat socializing as a burden,” says Xue Bing. “Especially when it relates to my job responsibility.”

To enlist her husband’s support, Xue says she estimates her finish time one hour later than its actual time. When she gets home, she volunteers every possible detail of the social.

“But it is true I sometimes feel totally out of it during the middle of a social when I suddenly think of my 7-year-old sitting at home alone.”

Embarrassment

Drinking alcohol is regarded by female managers as a situation ripe with social embarrassment and most say they can hardly drink at all.

But drinking alcohol oils the wheels of a typical business deal. Although women are not always forced to drink, they feel they have to pretend to be good at drinking — especially with important clients.

Most female managers agree with the survey statement “if you cannot drink, everything becomes difficult. But if you can, everything is easy.”

Xue remembers getting so drunk at a dinner with local government officials she passed out. “But those guys were very happy and the agreement was signed.”

Another embarrassment for female managers is people’s misunderstanding of public relations. Chinese people often believe public relations refers to dinners, dancing and singing karaoke songs.

Meng Fang remembers when she introduced herself to clients as a public

relations manager, “They looked at me strangely. A tall, good-looking young man even joked about becoming a male member of my public relations staff.”

Meng and most female managers live in dread of a certain kind of male colleague.

“They are handsome and they know how to approach female managers such as making calls and inviting them to dinner. If so, this is inappropriate behavior. I feel sick at the thought of them.”

No female managers can even make a suggestion about how to rid themselves of these men.

Interestingly, no female manager used the phrase “sexual harassment.” Instead, they only say it is privately embarrassing.

Advantages

All the surveyed female managers admit they also enjoy certain advantages over men, especially in social interactions. They believe they more easily attract a favorable opinion by dressing in a suit, wearing necklaces and earrings, sporting long hair and light makeup.

“A favorable impression is very important as, after all, a lot of managers are still men,” says Meng. “It’s true most male managers would rather talk to a pretty and smart opponent.”

“They may be willing to spend 20 minutes on such a woman instead of the three or five minutes they might give a man.”

A final plus is that most male managers like to be seen as gentlemen. Thus they may not want to lose their manners in front of women. They may more easily pardon a woman than a man for a faux pas.

Xue says female managers can quarrel with clients about cooperation, but “I am easily forgiven after talking strongly to them and we can still enjoy a pleasant relationship. Can male managers quarrel with their clients and then still get on well?”

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Chat, Love and the Internet

Female college student raped by man she met online

By Ivy Zhang

A 20-year-old man has been sentenced to six years in prison for the rape of an 18-year-old college girl he met online. The case was concluded last week in the Haidian District People's Court.

Romance turned into sexual violence

Qian Jin, an unemployed high school graduate from Hebei Province, came to Beijing in 1999. He started frequenting net cafés to play games and chat online in August last year.

On January 10 this year, Qian got to know Liu Le (pseudonym), a first year college student in Beijing, while chatting via OICQ (a Chinese version of the online chat service ICQ). He claimed to be a freshman at a film college majoring in stage design and the two exchanged contact numbers.

Two weeks after their first online encounter, they met in person. Four days later, they met again and had dinner together. When walking around Wanshoulu in the west of Beijing after dinner, Qian said to Liu, "I want your first kiss" and held her tightly. He then led the girl into the stairway of a building and attempted to have sex with her by force.

Liu cried out. Qian hit her on the head, pressed his mouth against hers and bit her tongue. The girl lost consciousness, and Qian raped her. When she came to, Qian had gone with 160 yuan from her purse and a Nokia mobile phone worth around 470 yuan.

Qian was caught four days later at the Yiyang Net café at Dongsi, Dongcheng District. He initially denied the charges, but a medical examination and a statement made by Liu's mother backed up Liu's allegations.

According to Liu's mother, Liu told her she was going to a classmate's party that day, but by 10 pm, she had still not shown up. She called Liu's cell phone and a man answered, saying he had borrowed the phone from Liu. When her daughter returned home, the mother found her lips swollen and her underwear stained with blood. They reported the incident to the police the next day.

The court found Qian guilty of rape. He has not appealed the sentence, which Liu's family believe "should have been more severe."

What caused the offence?

Qian's motive was not to rape Liu, but to obtain money by fraud or theft, he said during an interview with *Beijing Today* on Thursday.

He came to Beijing soon after graduating from a vocational high school, majoring in computer science.

He first worked as a waiter at a club then did business selling clothes, but he was cheated and lost 5,000 yuan in January this year.



Qian Jin Photo by Chen Shuyi

"After I was cheated, I felt kind of out of balance. I thought, if people cheat me, why can't I cheat others?"

The information I gave on the web was false. I thought I could take the money and get away without being caught.

I have chatted with 50 or 60 people on OICQ. I don't believe in 'online love,'" Qian Jin said.

Crimes of Internet passion

□ In May 2002, a female first-year college student, 20, was kidnapped and murdered by her online lover Bi Dongdong, 21, a high school graduate working as a systems administrator at a net cafe and his neighbor Tang Zhendong in Yichun, Heilongjiang Province.

□ In May 2002, six female teenagers were raped and murdered by Li Song and Xu Yuanqing in Kaifeng, Henan Province. The victims all frequently chatted online, which is how they met and arranged dates with the murderers.

□ In April 2002, a female immigrant worker wanted to separate with her lover Wu Qingxin, who she had lived with for a week after meeting online. Wu and his cousin Liu Ye subsequently raped and killed the girl's roommate.

□ In January 2002, a 16-year-old girl started taking heroin under the influence of Chen Chen, her heroin-addicted lover she met online. Both were caught trafficking heroin by the police.

"After I was cheated, I felt kind of out of balance. I thought, if people cheat me, why can't I cheat others?"

"I've read news reports before about people robbing or stealing money from people they met online. Then I got the idea of cheating people in the same way. Spring Festival was coming up, and I couldn't go back home empty-handed," he said.

"The information I gave on the web was false. I thought I could take the money and get away without being caught."

He said Liu was the first girl he communicated with after coming up with his scheme. After chatting online three or four times, half an hour each time, they met, but he did nothing the first time because he was afraid.

When they got together the second time a few days later, he says he lost control of himself and raped Liu. "I have chatted with 50 or 60 people on OICQ. I don't believe in 'online love,'" Qian said.

Who is to blame?

The Internet creates an open and virtual environment. People can use fake identification or addresses and it is hard for police to collect evidence, said Professor Zhao Guoling from the Law School of Beijing University.

As to online romance, Professor Zhao said, "It is related with society. The Internet is becoming more attractive as communication among families and friends is receding."

"People unknown to each other can chat freely about everything on web. But some are not aware they are being trapped."

Professor Zhao said crimes based on "online romance" could be grouped into two categories. One targets property, by means of fraud or theft. The other involves human abuse, including rape and kidnapping.

In terms of this case, the victim is also partly responsible. "Liu seems to have acted naively when dealing with strangers," Judge Yang said.

"Liu lacks a sense of precaution. This was their second date over a short period. But Qian embraced and kissed her and she did not fight back. She should have known well that such contact went beyond the limit of friendship," Yang said.

To minimize the risk of such crimes, Professor Zhao made the following suggestions:

- Authorities must step up efforts to crack down on Internet related crimes.
- Special government units should be established to supervise net cafés.
- Network security should be enhanced, both technically and legally.
- The media should publicize the risks surrounding online romance.
- People should be alert and cautious when chatting online.



English listening comprehension test was broadcast over the radio for the first time in this year's national exam.

English "mutes" challenged by exam

Listening Test Too Testing

By Su Wei

Four English listening test tapes were delivered under tight security to the Beijing People's Radio Station on the afternoon of July 8.

Only one radio station operator and two guards were allowed to enter the live broadcasting studio.

After an almost one-hour test broadcast, the listening comprehension component of the English test for the national university entrance exam began as scheduled at 3 pm.

This is the first time that the English listening comprehension test has been broadcast on radio almost nationwide.

It is also the first time that marks the listening test will constitute part of the score by which university enrollment eligibility is calculated.

English exam supervisors do not speak English

Most of the 680 students who took the English listening test at Fukang No. One Middle School, Changji, Xinjiang, expect to fail, though they insist through no fault of their own.

At 2:50 pm on July 8, supervisors started handing out the English examination paper while the trial part of the English listening test began broadcasting over a loudspeaker.

A few minutes later, the school started broadcasting directions to the examinees to fill in their names and exam ID numbers and other procedural instructions over the top of the trial broadcast.

At 3 pm, unannounced and without even a pause, the trial broadcast ended and the real listening comprehension test started. Few students realized, however, as the procedural instructions continued to be broadcast for another two minutes.

At 3:10, the listening comprehension test ended, and it was only then that it dawned on most students that they had missed it.

"I never realized the formal part of the test had begun," was the common comment of both students and supervisors later.

A few students said that some supervisors reminded them at 3:00 to concentrate on the comprehension test broadcast.

"I was puzzled that the formal listening test was set to begin at 3 pm, but the broadcast of the procedural instructions was still going at that time," said one exam supervisor who declined to give his name.

He added that the supervisors should be held responsible for the incident, saying, "Something must have gone wrong with the operation of the broadcast, but the incident could have been avoided if the 40 supervisors had known a little English."

The students have been told they will not be able to re-sit for the listening test.

"It is a national unified exam. There is clear notice between the broadcasting of the trial and the formal part," said an official from the English department of the Examination Center, who also declined to give his name.

Complaints about broadcast quality

Students at Changji were not the

only ones to encounter problems with the listening comprehension test.

Parents of students at Natou Middle School, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, are concerned that poor quality headphones purchased for the test might have contributed to their children's poor performance.

One student said the school asked them to buy a set of headphones priced at 38 yuan for the listening test. "We could hear nothing except static during the trial test," she said.

After reporting this to the supervisor, the school decided to use its own public address system for the test.

Thirty students sitting in one examination room heard the broadcast through one loudspeaker hanging on a side wall. "Sometimes it was too loud and sometimes it was too low," many students later complained.

A teacher of the school, who did not give his name, said all the earphones were purchased from designated suppliers and worked properly during the trial. He also pointed out that the use of the school's public address system had been approved by the Shenzhen Education Bureau.

A staff member of the Shenzhen Education Bureau said, "It was too hot and the operation of air-conditioners certainly affected the signal received by the earphones."

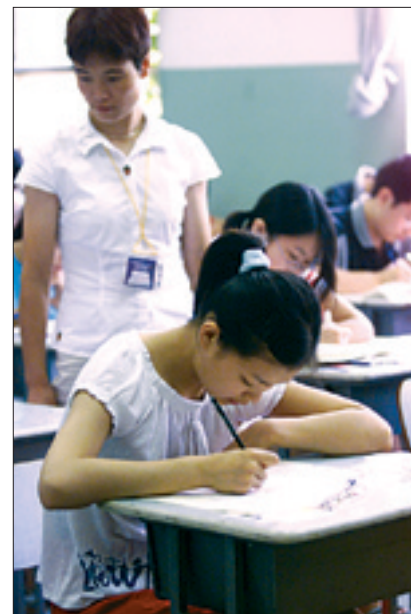
He conceded that students sitting in different places in the same room may have experienced some variations in reception, but insisted this "would not have any influence."

The supervisors said they could hear the broadcast clearly, and suggested that the students may simply have been too nervous to concentrate.

Listening exam goes on

Pointing out that the listening test is regarded as a key reform to the national entrance exams, especially in testing students' practical English skills, deputy general director of the Ministry of Education Yuan Guiren says, "In the past, some students have been effectively mute; though they obtain high marks in the written test, they are unable to understand or talk with foreigners."

He concedes that the radio broadcasting of the test will inevitably suffer some teething problems, especially in areas with "less matured conditions."



Photos by Bai Zi

A Brave Journey into Art Administration

Working as an arts administrator brings me much happiness. As the first Chinese person to receive a Graduate Diploma in Management (Arts) in Australia, I would like to continue my involvement in and contribution to the development of arts administration in China into the next century. I will always be passionate about improving the cultural exchange between China and other countries with the skills and knowledge I have attained through this course.

— Qiao Luqiang, yearbook message, 1998, University of South Australia



Qiao received his Master's degree in Australia in 1999. Photo provided by Qiao Luqiang



Qiao is currently working as the sales manager at the Fine Art Gallery in the Dali exhibition touring China. Photos by Zhuang Jian

By Zhao Pu

Monday morning, Qiao Luqiang reported to work as the new sales manager at the Fine Art Gallery, which takes up one corner of the exhibition of works by Salvador Dalí, *A Journey into Fantasy*, currently running at the China Millennium Monument. The gallery was established in April by the Italy-based Stratton Foundation and Denmark's United Exhibits Group to travel with the Dalí exhibition around the world, selling duplicates of the surrealist's works. Qiao was invited to watch over the gallery as the local coordinator during the show's six-month tour in China.

Qiao says he is very excited to be working on the Dalí exhibition. "They need a person who can speak English and has a background in art administration, meaning I am well qualified," he adds with a smile.

First Chinese holder of an Australian art MBA

While a graduate student at the International Graduate School of Management, University of South Australia, working on a degree in culture and arts industry management, Qiao frequently asked his professors, "how can I relate all these Western theories of art management to the situation in China?" He was concerned by the great differences between the art and culture he was learning about and that in his home country. Later, he came to the relieving determination that theories and skills for management of culture and art are basically universal.

Qiao started down the road of becoming the first Chinese student to receive a Master's degree in cultural and arts industry management in Australia, when he was recommended by the Australia-China Council for acceptance at the University of South Australia in Adelaide in 1997.

His was the only Chinese face among his primarily Australian classmates. Though he was awarded a scholarship for his first year of study, he had to supplement the funds by working part-time in Adelaide. His first job was washing dishes in a small restaurant in the city's Chinatown for four hours a day.

Outside of his studies, Qiao strove to participate in the local community. His second part-time job was as Project Executive at the Nexus Multi-cultural Art Center, a glorious time for Qiao. He organized two shows of Asian arts in 1999, which he says generated a fever for things Asian among local people. He also participated in field work for an Asian art research project run by the Adelaide Arts Center.

Qiao graduated in 2000. Many friends pushed him to stay in Australia, but he says, "I felt I should come back." In China's ballooning art and culture market, he saw a clear need for trained art management personnel.

He returned to Beijing in early 2000, shortly after which he took his first work position as Project Executive at Beijing New Music Entertainment Company. During his four month stay at the company, he took part in the production of the CCTV (China Central Television) program *The Same Song*, and organized the Beijing premiere of the

movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Before joining the Dalí exhibition this Monday, he worked for a German company for one year and served as the manager of Red Gate Gallery.

"I can't enjoy life without the arts."

"It's a pity that my fate wasn't to be an artist, but at least I have become an administrator so I can serve art," says Qiao.

Qiao was born in 1963 in Dezhou, Shandong Province, the son of two doctors. Like most people born in the 1960s, dark images from the Cultural Revolution lurk behind his memories of childhood, but Qiao has never let those scars have a negative impact on his life, thanks to the optimism and strength he says he inherited from his mother.

As a kid, Qiao poured his talents and efforts into dancing, sports and English classes, basically overlooking math, physics and chemistry. He now believes he was born with a passion and drive towards all things artistic.

He still remembers the thrill of seeing a piano for the first time as a middle school student. "I had never imagined that an instrument could make such beautiful sounds," he says.

The times were not on his side, however, and in the face of the strong prejudice in place against students interested in the arts, Qiao's passion was contained and he was forced to change his focus.

After graduating from Shandong Normal University as an English major in 1986, Qiao turned down an opportunity to teach at the university and took a position at the Shandong Cultural Bureau. For him, entering the world of in-

ternational cultural and art exchange was like a fish returning to water, and proved to be the start of a fruitful career.

Ten joyful years passed in the blink of an eye. From 1986 to 1997, Qiao stood at the vanguard of the surge of cultural exchange between China and foreign countries, hosting numerous visiting art groups from abroad and leading tours of guests from around the world of local art shows.

"The Australian projects, in particular, left positive and unforgettable impressions on me, especially the Australian String Quartet in 1996," says Qiao, who also has strong memories of the Shandong Acrobatic Troupe's European tour in 1991. During this period, he was transferred to the Chinese Embassy in Nigeria as Cultural Attaché and Third Secretary from 1992 to 1994. "I was definitely a lucky man to be able to work in my field of interest and passion," adds Qiao.

As a government employee, Qiao earned only enough to take care of his basic living expenses, "But I never minded," he says.

His limited income over those ten years was more than made up for when he was recommended for graduate study in Australia in 1997 in the field of culture and art industry management. When he graduated a couple years later from the University of South Australia, he wrote inside his yearbook, "I can't enjoy life without the arts."

China is far behind other countries in art management education

"China has a long way to go in the

area of culture and art industry management," says Qiao. Two years ago, when he returned home from Australia, he was determined to accelerate the progress of culture and art management in China, but after two years in the field, he came to see the distance between his ideals and the realities of the country.

"I'm still looking for a suitable situation in which I can fully utilize the knowledge and skills I've acquired," says Qiao. He fears, however, that in some domestic organizations in charge of culture and art management where he could have a large impact, his forward ideas would run afoul of their conventional environments.

He suggests, "The government should make more efforts to preserve Chinese traditional culture and arts, and support the further development of China's own art organizations. Present trends are not healthy, with art events brought from foreign countries dominating the market and getting most of the attention and money."

Culture and arts industry management is a new concept in China, and only Peking University and the Central Academy of Drama offer majors in the field. Both lack qualified teachers and materials. As one of the few domestic professionals in the area, Qiao has been asked to teach at both universities.

Last year, he was invited to give two speeches to culture and arts management students at Peking University, and his relaxed but informative presentations were well received. Qiao is now translating an English-language textbook about art management, for use as the basic material in future classes.



Qiao worked at the Red Gate Gallery in Beijing for half a year before joining the Dalí exhibition.



In his spare time, Qiao likes to hit the weights at the Nirvana fitness club.



Qiao scrambles to put the final touches on the Dalí exhibition before its opening ceremony at the China Millennium Monument.



Adriano Madaro holding a picture of the Yuanmingyuan ruin at Beihai
Photo by Zhuang Jian

A Modern Marco Polo

Italian Historian Brings Collection of Old Beijing Photos to Beihai

By Miao Yajie

When talking about the best-known Italian in China, Marco Polo would most likely top the list. However after this week, the name Adriano Madaro, a fellow countryman of Marco Polo and described by some as a "modern Marco Polo" will no doubt be remembered by many Chinese.

Adriano Madaro, a China expert, historian, writer, and journalist who has visited China 107 times since 1976, is opening an exhibition next Wednesday about Beijing at the beginning of last century.

The materials and photos on which the exhibition is based are the former property of Giuseppe Salvago Raggi, who was the Italian ambassador in Beijing from 1900 to 1901. It is the first time in 100 years these materials have been seen in China.

Using the photos and diary kept by the ambassador, Madaro has also been able to complete his book on the 55-day Boxer Rebellion in 1900, which reveals some new insights about the incident, from the point of view of an on-the-spot diplomat.

As to how he acquired the photos and materials, Adriano Madaro told *Beijing Today* the remarkable story in his hotel room at the Marco Polo Hotel near Xidan.

Diplomatic baggage

Adriano Madaro knew of the ambassador long ago, and in his search for information for his book on the Boxer Rebellion, had written to Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for more information about him. Giuseppe Salvago Raggi died in 1944, and his wife, Camilla Salvago Raggi, died some 30 years earlier, before World War I. They had a son who was a child during their stay in Beijing, and who died before his father, without marrying. After years of searching, Madaro came to the conclusion that there were no surviving family members.

Just at the time when he had almost given up, he chanced upon a book whose author bore the same name as the ambassador's wife. With doubt in his mind he bought the book, and found that in it, the author talked about her grandfather, ambassador Giuseppe Salvago Raggi.

It turned out that the ambassador's son had a child with a woman who was married but separated later with her husband. After his son died, the ambassador realized that the little girl,



Chongwenmen, the entrance gate to the Legation Quarter from the east, being demolished in 1959.

his grand daughter, was his only family, so he gave her his name and she inherited his legacy.

Madaro called the granddaughter of the ambassador, who was then over 70 years of age, and asked whether her grandfather had left any documents and whether she would help him with his book about China.

She said yes and asked him to come to her house. He did so and the woman showed him an extraordinary collection of photos of Beijing, the ambassador, his family and friends, the army, and other ambassadors, as well as diaries written by the ambassador and his wife, menus, old

maps, an imperial order bearing the seal of Emperor Guangxu authorizing the ambassador to return to Italy through Mongolia.

When Madaro asked whether he could borrow some of the materials, the woman said, "No, you cannot borrow it, it is yours, it all belongs to you."

She told him her grandfather once told her that she should look after his China material and not give it to anyone. Maybe one day a clever man would come for it, and she should only give it to him.

The granddaughter told Madaro that the moment she saw him, she knew he

was the man.

"It was like a magic story," said Madaro, "I brought 80 kilos of materials to Beijing for the exhibition. But the materials don't belong to me. I think one day the museum in my home city Venice will collect them."

"In Italy, they call me Chinese"

Adriano Madaro has written over a thousand articles and many books about China since his first visit in 1976, but his fascination with China dates back to his childhood. When he was six years old, his mother gave him a picture book about Marco Polo, and he dreamed that one day, he would see China with his own eyes. At the age of 14, he bought his first Chinese novel, an Italian translation of the True Story of Ah Q by Lu Xun, which left a deep impression on him.

Several years later, he graduated from university with a thesis titled *Political Doctrines on the Chinese Revolution*.

In Italy, Madaro's friends call him "Chinese," and he says that if the "other life" theory is true, maybe he lived some time before in China like his ambassador, or maybe he was Chinese once.

The newly opened gallery at Beihai Park

Another reason to visit the exhibition is the venue, Huafangzhai (画舫斋) on the east bank of Beihai. Huafangzhai is a courtyard built in the mid-18th century by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty. The emperor used it to meet with painters and sometimes practiced calligraphy there. It was also the place where the imperial family spent the night when they went to Beihai Park.

Architecturally, Huafangzhai rates as one of the most beautiful buildings in the 900-year-old park. After 1924, it was used as an art gallery, however it was closed in the 1980s. After a one-year renovation Huafangzhai will open again to the public with the launch of Madaro's exhibition of old Beijing photos.

When: July 24 - August 31

Where: Huafangzhai, Beihai Park

Tel: 8404 6088

Admission: Pick up a free ticket for the exhibition from the east gate of Beihai.



Red Flag 20 fetched for 26,000 yuan.

Collectors Snap Up Old Cameras

By Li Xinli / Miao Yajie

China Guardian concluded its 71st Weekend Auction last Sunday, at which watches, clocks and cameras supplemented the usual paintings, porcelain and calligraphy. Some 300 lots sold for a total of 190,000 yuan. Famous brands from China, Germany and Japan, including Red Flag, Leica, Minox, and Rollei proved their popularity with collectors.

Lot 2195, a Red Flag 20 camera set the record for Sunday's auction, selling for 26,000 yuan after ten rounds of fierce bidding, twice the estimate price of 12,000 yuan.

According to a Guardian spokesperson, the reason this particular model Red Flag is so widely sought after is that very few were manufactured, and they were made to a very high standard. The Red Flag 20 was closely modeled on the Leica M-4, with its bayonet lens mount. Fewer than 400 of this type were made in the early 1970s, making it an irresistible investment for collectors.

Two 1940's Leica 3-Cs were also offered at the auction, one with an estimate of 4,000 - 5,000 yuan, the other 6,000 - 7,000 yuan. The two cameras were almost identical, the only difference being that the more expensive one was manufactured during World War II, and due to a shortage of materials, the usual black mask around the film plane was replaced with a red one. "Rarity determines the price" is the golden rule at auctions.

Compared with porcelain and jade ware, the investment required for collecting cameras is relatively low, and the appreciation is relatively steady, so is collecting cameras a good choice for those simply seeking to make an investment?

According to Liang Weimin of Guardian's Watch, Clock and Camera Department, the answer is no, as collecting cameras requires knowledge of optics, mechanics, and materials, while the ability to verify the quality of an old camera takes considerable experience.

Generally speaking, if one wants to collect cameras, the first thing to consider is the brand and model. The second is the quantity manufactured: the fewer made, the higher the price, and finally, the condition the camera is in.

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By Zhao Pu / Zhang Huan

The largest exhibition of works by Spanish Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí that has ever toured China opened Monday at the China Millennium Monument Art Gallery.

A Journey into Fantasy — the Salvador Dalí Interactive Collection, organized by the Stratton Foundation of Italy and Denmark's United Exhibits Group, features sculpture, furniture, and rare graphics portfolios selected from private collections and cultural organizations throughout the world never before seen in China.

Salvador Dalí was unquestionably one of the great artistic giants of the 20th century. His profound surrealist vision and artistic talent produced memorable artworks that have never diminished in the popularity with the public. During the 1920s and 1930s he developed his "paranoiac-critical" method of artistic creation, earning him notoriety within the Surrealist movement.

According to president of the Stratton Foundation Beniamino Levi, the exhibition is intended to reveal the foundations that lay beneath Dalí's inspired genius and to offer an understanding of his art and life. It allows the visitor to delve into the labyrinth of Dalí's mind and to view the creative results of his imagination, displaying his artworks within the three major themes representative of his artistic legacy: "Dreams and Fantasy," "Sensuality and Femininity," and "Religion and Mythology."

The Dalí Collection also features specially created interactive materials, interspersed with various special effects that create a truly "Dalíesque" atmosphere.

Dreams and Fantasy

Many of Dalí's most important works are the result of the wild images that came to him in dreams, in combination with the violent feelings that surfaced in opposition to the ordinary world, the world of "reason." His earlier works focused particularly on many of these dream images. By making himself "the other," Dalí was able to explore himself, his dreams and his thoughts.

The melted clocks for which Dalí is most famous, seen in the sculptures *Persistence of Memory* and *Profile of Time*, depict Dalí's fantastical relationship with time, his perception of its constriction limitations and the importance he believed to be inherent in memory. Dalí's feelings about the clock, the keeper of time, are evident as he most often portrays the clock as soft, a type of symbolism he reserved for objects that he reviled.

Sensuality and Femininity

Artworks focusing on sensuality and femininity often feature recurring images Dalí stumbled upon in his dreams. Freud identifies the unconscious as being composed of repressed sexual desire and drive. Repeatedly, Dalí created works detailing his obsession with sexual anxieties in relation to his sexual identity. Throughout his youth, he was plagued by severe insecurity and fear in relation to women and sexual relations, however his relationship with his wife Gala played a major part in changing his idea towards femininity and the female form.

Gala, the passionate Russian woman whom he met in 1929 and whom he regarded as the ideal representation of womanhood, was Dalí's inspirational creative muse. It was she who exerted the strongest influence on his depiction of the female form.

The topic of "Sensuality and Femininity" is represented by several important pieces. Of particular interest is the *Mae West Lips Sofa*, created in the late 1930s and in-



Mae West Lips
1936-1995

Dalí Hits Town



Femme a la Tete de Roses
1981



Cabinet Anthropomorphique
1982

spired by the voluptuous actress known for her provocative one-liners.

Religion and Mythology

Dalí had a tempestuous relationship with the Catholic Church throughout his life. Like other intellectuals and artists of the time, he attempted to reject his faith along with many other bourgeois traditions in the 1920s and 1930s.

His actions were part of his determination to live a life out of the ordinary, a life in which he would not compromise by accepting banal tradition, but rather ceaselessly question everything. The Surrealist movement was strongly linked with various mythologies during this period, holding the general belief that the individual psyche was reflected in the myths of society, and vice versa. The idea that myths dealt with important and often repressed aspects of human nature obviously had a great influence on Dalí, as someone obsessed with his own self-analysis.

Dalí read philosophy extensively, and his father's atheism also led him to question his own religious views. His mother, however, was a devout Catholic, and despite his constant exploration, Dalí never fully succeeded in abandoning the faith of his childhood.

The sculpture *The Snail and the Angel* incorporates two of Dalí's favorite images, ever-recurring in his work. The use of sharp contrasts (the slow movement of the snail contrasts with the speed of the small winged messenger) further accentuates the attributes, or characteristics, of each figure. Both religion and mythology constantly permeate his work.

Two of Dalí's best know works are included in this area, the illustrations for the *Bible*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Both epic works include over 100 graphics, and are prime examples of the artist's vivid imagination and capability to reinterpret classic works through his own unique and bizarre vision.

Interactive elements enhance audience interest

The interactive elements adopted in the exhibition offer a fresh approach to the expression of Dalí's art works and at the same time narrow the gap between the audience and his art.

One of the interactive elements is a control panel named Light and Shadow beside a sculpture titled *Nobility of Time* in the "Dreams and Fantasy" section. In the control panel there are six balls, each of which is connected to a light set around the sculpture. By placing a hand on one of the balls for different periods of time, visitors can control the intensity of an individual light, and thus see how variations of light affect the appreciation of an artwork.

Other interactive elements include visual image creation devices that allow visitors to create original artworks themselves. Using a camera connected to a computer, visitors can take pictures of themselves, and then change the pictures by twirling, enlarging, shrinking and smudging parts of the pictures. Or, they can choose an image created by Dalí as the background and integrate their own image into it to make a new picture.

Where: Art Museum of the China Millennium Monument, 9A Fuxing Lu, Haidian District (next to Military Museum)

When: till October 15
Tel: 68513322

Photo by Lily

Snail and the Angel
1977-1984

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By Zhu Lin

Eighteen local bands competed in a playoff this week for the right to perform in the first Snow Mountain Music Festival in Lijiang, Yunnan Province. Three bands will be chosen from among those that played at CD Café last Sunday and this Monday to participate in the music carnival on August 17 and 18 at the foot of Lijiang's Jade Dragon Snow Mountain.

"We want to catch as many chances to perform as possible," said guitarist Chen Chen of the all-girl band *Wild Strawberry*. Talking about the Snow Mountain Music Festival, all five band members were extremely excited about the prospect of taking part.

The truth is, the stage for bands like *Wild Strawberry* is too limited in Beijing. "The reason we hold this festival is that we want to offer an opportunity to the talents," said godfather of Chinese rock, Cui Jian, who is artistic director of the festival.

According to You You, manager of the performance department of Pulay Music, one of the festival sponsors, the enthusiasm of the candidate

bands is very high. "I'm a little bit surprised to hear their singing," said Deng Shang from the audience, "Because I didn't expect they could perform so well."

During the open-air music festival, all together 20 bands from China and abroad will perform. As well as the three winners from the CD Café competition, the festival will feature popular local bands such as *Zi Yue*, *Second Hand Rose* and *CMCB*, and also Cui Jian, Zhu Zheqin, Dou Wei and Wang Lei. Among the international contingent are *Birgit* and *Systex* from the Netherlands, as well as some non-mainstream folk artists.

"The Snow Mountain Music Festival is the first international open-air music festival in China. We hope to hold it every year, to develop it into a key music festival in China," said You You.

Bands Vie for Snow Mountain Music Festival Spot



Photo by Cui Jun / Jackey

Summer Pop Coming up

By Yi He

Two open-air concerts this summer will brighten the lives of pop music fans in Beijing.

The concert at the Workers' Stadium this Saturday marks the fifth anniversary of Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty. It will feature such Hong Kong pop icons as Karen Mok, Andy Lau, Nicholas Tse, Tong Ange, Gigi Leung and Hang Hong.

Early next month, Lo Tayu will make his first live appearance in Beijing since setting up his new Music Factory.

Karen Mok

Photo by Cui Jun



Film Week to Raise Profile of Documentaries

By Li Hongyu / Zhu Lin

The Film Week of Chinese Documentaries opening today will show five films in Chinese directed by Chen Jianjun, assistant director of the Cultural Feature Department of China Central TV Station. It is so difficult to find a market for documentaries in China that *Soul of the Herdsmen*, one of the works to be shown during the festival is screening publicly for the first time six years after its completion.

Besides *Soul of the Herdsmen*, the four other films by Chen are part of the pro-

posed 12-part *Chinese Civilization* series. Started in 1997, the series aims to cover China's 5,000-year history up to the end of the Qing Dynasty. Chen has so far completed four parts; fast work for this genre. On average, the China National Documentary Studio completes only one documentary every two years.

In the first four parts of *Chinese Civilization*, the story of archaeological study is combined into the documentary. Chen uses contemporary shooting and design techniques, which lighten the atmosphere of the work. "I don't care so much about

what method I'm using. I don't want to confine myself to any technological limit," he says.

Soul of the Herdsmen tells about the way of life of the people of Kazak nationality of northwest China. What makes it distinctive is that the characters ignore the camera lens. The first month Chen and his small team spent with a Kazak family, they did not take a single shot. In the following weeks, the family members had become used to, and ignored, the presence of the camera.

When Chen offered *Soul of the Herds-*

men to Beijing cinemas after finishing it in 1996, none were prepared to show it. "As soon as they hear the word 'documentary,' they won't accept it," said Chen, "They carry a serious prejudice, that documentaries are too 'elegant' for the general audience, and they can never achieve a good box office. But it's not like that. If audiences are vulgar, it's because what they are offered is vulgar. Why not give them something elegant?"

"If the feedback is good, that will be a great spur to Chinese documentary directors and producers," said Chen.

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Gallery Liberates Talented Designers



Stainless steel simplicity

By Dany

Beauty breathes unfussy and unfettered in the Jian Design Gallery. Black, white and gray dominate this 100-square-meter creative space, yet the corners burn brighter — candlesticks and vases in orange, pink, red, blue and green.

"A lawyer bought all her curtains and sofas just to match one of Qingqing's lamps which cost her about 8,000 yuan," says gallery clerk Ma Haiyan.

Chen Qingqing (who asks to be called Qingqing) is one of 10 designers invited by gallery owner Weng Jing to present their furniture, painting or decorative ideas for exhibition and sale.

But Qingqing is not in this for the money.

One day at age 40, she quit her white-collar job and began to make art. She had no background or experience in the business.

Through losing her parents young, through working in a factory and later at a foreign company, Qingqing says she felt it a growing sense of anomie. In art, she found freedom.

Her artworks, clothes and a door screen of flaxen thread and silk, decay a fragile beauty, perhaps a sense of being lost.

"Art is not Chinese ink and

wash," says Qingqing. "Nor is it oil painting, installation or performance. Art is a way of thinking, an approach to thinking."

The Chinese character 简 (jian, simplicity) is more than the gallery's logo.

"Realizing the truth of life is the initial and ultimate purpose of designing for us," introduces the gallery blurb.

Weng explains a bit more. "Many western installation designers mix oriental taste into their works," she says. "We feel we must catch up them in this field."

"In fact, there are many excellent domestic designers and our gallery provides a space for them to establish contact with ordinary people and sell at a good price."

Contemporary installation artist Shao Feng's furniture combines both western and Ming Dynasty styles.

"It is a wonder that in very simple geometric forms, the character of Chinese ancient furniture still reveals such vitality," says Weng. Most of Shao's furniture is made of black wood or stainless steel.

But a short shopping article cannot fairly contain all the designs. Readers had best see for themselves whether through the expression of shapes and colors, this gallery realizes the "truth of life."

Where: 简 Gallery, 8 Jiannedajie, C 238, 2nd floor of COFCO Plaza, Chaoyang District

Price: 60-300 yuan for candle sticks; 200-400 yuan for vases; wooden chair 18,000 yuan

Open: 9am-9pm

Tel: 8731 5407

"Art is not Chinese ink and wash. Nor is it oil painting, installation or performance. Art is a way of thinking, an approach to thinking." — Qingqing



Door screen, by Qingqing

Photos by Li Shuzhuan



Café Returns to Its Roots

By Salinda

Today, CD Café opens its brother bar — the CD Café Jazz Club, 100 meters north. Without media fanfare or frills, the new club opens simply for live jazz every night.

As one of the city's older bars, CD Café has a seven-year history of live music performed every night. Once the jazz standard of the capital city, demand drove the venue towards rock music.

With the demise of local legends like Keep in Touch and Busy Bee, the 30-square-meter stage lent itself to live rock performance.

"We try to create the air of small-scale concert with advanced equipment," says owner Hu Xiaoyun. From the ground to the second floor balcony, spectators in each corner can feel the vibrations of the music fill the bar.

Cui Jian, Confucius Says (Zi Yue) and other leading lights sometimes show up.

"We give a development chance for underground bands who have little chance to perform and lie outside mainstream music."

Liu Yuan, one of the bar's founders, says, "We will show more loving care towards the development of alternative bands."

The bar has had its share of difficulties and frustration, but is now emerging as a premier small live music venue.

"We want to provide a creative atmosphere for rock and jazz in a bid to spread these two music cultures," says Hu.

"Rock music with its strong stimulus is suited to young people. But more middle-aged people enjoy a quieter atmosphere to appreciate jazz. So, we decided to do both."

Where: South of Agriculture Exhibition Centre, Dongsanhuan Beilu, 16 Chaoyang District

Open: 6 pm-2 am

Tel: 6501 8877 ext. 3032



The owners seek to fuse jazz and rock.

Color Me Impressed at Comic Bar

By Dany

They come here to concentrate on doing almost nothing at all. Adults and children arrive and seek out a quiet corner, choose a sofa and then set themselves to reading.

A Korean-looking kid leans against a wall leafing. A teen slacker dozes off on a table. The clerk covers him against the cold. Warmth and comfort emanate from the smiles and gestures of the staff.

The green bookshelves line pink and yellow walls alongside dazzling posters by comic artists. This is said to be the first true comic bar in China, possessing a collection of thousands of comic books — domestic, Japanese, Korean, European and American.

There are dozens of comic-related products, more than 10 different newspapers and 60 magazines plus literature, travel and finance publications. An internet service and CD exchange are



Japanese like this store.



Dazzling poster decorates the wall

also available.

The cheapest drink here is five yuan. That means for five yuan, comic lovers can come, sit and read whatever comic books they like. For a one-hour maximum.

"Combining comic reading with bar style service is totally new and creative for us," says owner Xiao Yu.

"To attract more comic fans to get together in a cozy and comfortable environment, we invited a Taiwan designer to employ a Japanese decorative style."

The most frequent customers appear to be university students from nearby including Japanese and Koreans.

Where: 6 Wudaokouxcun, opposite the west gate of Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, north of Universiade Village, Haidian District

Open: 1pm-2 am; after September, 24-hour service

Tel: 8233 3057



Inside are some beans, carrot and orange pieces.

Glass Fantasia for Everyone

By Dany

Carrots, bananas, apples, eggplants, pumpkins and cobs of corn sit on display in the window.

But better watch your mouth. Everything here is glass, nearly 500 different kinds.

Glass works pepper places like Panjiayuan, Hongqiao and the counters of shopping malls with their crude or exquisite workmanship.

But in Beijing, there's no place like Jane's Glass Art, with its comprehensive range of glass artwork. It's a perfect store if one wanted to become a collector of glass art in a short time, say, one day.

Glass stuff includes dinner sets, vases, candlesticks, perfume bottles and familiar and unfamiliar decorative objects. Customers' favorites include animals, vegetables and flowerpots.

A 5-centimeter-long dragonfly with a blue body and green wings radiates light in all directions. Glass bubbles float in a tank of water, and inside a wire supports a dolphin no bigger than a finger.

Owner Gu Hongjian says such exquisite products were originally exported to Europe and North America. Now it's our turn.

Where: 8 Jiannedajie, C 227, 2nd floor of COFCO Plaza, Chaoyang District

Price: 8-1,200 yuan, candy 8 yuan, dragonfly 30 yuan, flowerpot 40yuan, vegetables 40-50 yuan

Open: 9am-9pm

Tel: 8511 3580



Glass thinker?

What's your favorite shop, stand, bar or restaurant? We will be very happy to share your experience with all our readers and a mystery gift is waiting for you if we print your story. Please contact us at 6590-2524. E-mail: shopping@ynet.com.

Kitsch Cars Entice Collectors

By Salinda

The King meets the Chairman only at the Beijing branch of the Hong Kong Collectors Club in Deshengmen.

A Coca-Cola delivery truck, a pink Cadillac and a Dong Feng Golden Dragon may look like glorified toys for boys, but these exact miniature replicas are much, much more expensive.

"A replica's value depends on the availability of spares and its closeness to the real car itself," says Gao Min, a replica car collector.

Although few have heard "Jailhouse Rock" or "Love Me Tender", most Chinese have heard of the legendary "Cat King," as Elvis Aaron Presley is better known in Beijing.

A 175-part, 1:24 replica of the pink limo the royal pussy presented to Gladys Presley forms the fascinating centerpiece of this collection, yours for a mere 1,190 yuan. This marvelous moment from Franklin Mint belongs to fans of early Elvis — young, dynamic, rockin' — who

gave his mom an all-American car. This is not the kind of car that belonged to the kung-fu fightin', drug-riddled, pudgy-faced crooner of later years.

In his later years, Mao Zedong once said, "How wonderful it is taking a ride in the



Not a toy

first car made in China." But more wonderful still, why not own a replica Dong Feng Golden Dragon, the miniature driving legacy of the Helmsman himself.

To recognize the great contribution made by First Automobile Works to the Chinese auto industry, it was resolved a true-scale replica would be produced as a collectible miniature.

"Each exclusive and highly collectible model of the Dong Feng has been built to the international scale of 1:18," introduces the promotional blurb for this definitely-not-a-toy car.

"Every individual model car has undergone the most advanced manufacturing technology and comprises more than 300 precision-made parts that are an achievement in themselves."

Where: the agent at Room 206, Huixiang Building, 14 Wulutong, Deshengmendajie, Dongcheng District

Open: 9 am-6 pm

Tel: 6200 3825

Office Space Stable in Second Quarter

By Julie

In the second quarter of 2002, the Beijing office market continued to decline with asking rents falling, while the average vacancy rate stabilized, as new offices did not enter the market and existing space was gradually filled.

Traditional industries were the driving force behind office space demand, followed by companies in the hi-tech sector. Domestic companies continued to play a larger part in the market than their foreign counterparts.

Looking ahead, the trend towards consolidation is expected to continue in Beijing's office market in the third quarter of this year in light of the relatively sluggish performance of the overall economy. A number of new developments will open, intensifying the already fierce competition in the sector.

Supply

In the second quarter of the year, no new grade-A office buildings came onto the market and total available office space in the city stood at 2.83 million square meters, the same as in the first quarter.

Despite the lack of new supply in the second quarter, the amount of existing office space maintained the level of competition in the market. A considerable amount of office space was open in prime office buildings within and around the CBD, such as Beijing Oriental Plaza, China Life Tower, Avic Tower and Ying Jia Center. In addition, an increasing amount of office space returned to the market as the result of mergers and acquisitions among multinational companies.

Demand

Traditional sectors continued to outperform the hi-tech sector in the office market in the second quarter. The media industry stood out in the market with Sunshine Stone leasing 3,000 square meters of offices in Hanwei Plaza and Legend AOL leasing 1,890 square meters in Raycom Infotech Park. Demand for office space was also strong among WTO-related industries, especially the auto and investment sectors.

Volkswagen leased approximately 3,000 square meters of space in Beijing Kerry Centre, Capital Investment leased 1,500 square meters in the Tengda Building and Winsan China Investment leased 1,400 square meters in Avic Tower.

The hi-tech sector, which had been flat in previous quarters, began to revive in the second quarter, led by Sun Microsystems's R&D division leasing 3,000

Beijing
Office

square meters in the Xue-zhi Building and Nokia expanding its offices in Pacific Century Place by 3,000 square meters. Shenzhen Huawei, a domestic tele-

communications company, leased 2,600 square meters of offices in the Taikang Building.

In the office investment market, domestic companies continued their momentum. Compared to the first quarter, during which sales transactions were concentrated in the west of Beijing, domestic companies began to extend their purchases to the eastern sections of town.

Leasing market

The average asking rent for grade A offices was \$24.38/sqm/month, down 1.33 percent from the first quarter and the fifth consecutive quarter of decline. The falling rents can be attributed to several factors. Tenants tightened their budgets for leasing offices due to the weakened.

Demand for office space shrank with the trend towards mergers and acquisition among multinational companies.

Sales Market

The average sales asking price in the second quarter was \$2,180/sqm, a marginal decrease of 0.9 percent from the first quarter. With robust demand for newly-launched grade A office buildings in the east of Beijing and limited new supply, buyers had to turn to the pre-existing office buildings sold by strata titles.

Vacancy Rate

The overall vacancy rate among grade-A office buildings dropped to 15.64 percent from 16.64 percent in the first quarter. Vacancy in the east of Beijing decreased as a result of the increasing take up of office space by multinationals due to the deepening WTO effect. In contrast, the vacancy rate in the west rose as a considerable amount of office space was put on the market as many companies moved to the east of the city.

Forecast

At least four office buildings will come on line in the third quarter, swelling available office space. At the same time, the global economic downturn will continue to force multinationals to consolidate their offices in order to control costs. Therefore, it seems likely that Beijing's office market in the third quarter will show the continuation of the second quarter's trend towards consolidation and asking rents will continue to slide.

The above information is provided by DTZ Debenham Tie Leung. For more information please visit: www.dtz.com



Photos by Stephen Brown

In the Great Wall's Shadow

By Stephen Brown

You would expect an avant-garde development within walking distance of the Great Wall to raise a storm of protest from conservationists and traditionalists. Local media reports, however, have chosen to focus on the trend-setting business savvy of the developers, a couple, themselves. Huaxia lifestyle magazine ran a profile of Zhang Xin, one of

the two, on the front cover of their issue, complete with family photos and pictures of her Cambridge University graduation splattered across the five-page spread. The few voices of media dissent heard were from local papers who fussed over accusations of 'impractical' houses that people would not want to live in.

The valley lies outside the conservation

area that prohibits building within 200 meters of the Great Wall, says Zhang.

"If it's one kilometer away, I'm relatively happy," muses William Lindesay, Great Wall conservationist and veteran of more than 400 days walking on the Wall. But the project infringes on his theories of "Wallscape" -- that not only the Wall should be protected, but also the landscape, the lives of local residents, and traditional buildings should remain unchanged. Certainly not the place for exposed concrete constructions, says Lindesay, "Avant-garde architecture is alien, and blatantly unsuitable when you consider the majesty of the Wall. Keep structures like these in the cities, and leave the countryside alone."

Dotted around the foothills of the Great Wall lie examples of Lindesay's concerns: garish hotel and commercial developments abandoned either from lack of money or lack of consumer interest, and Lindesay frets about the spread of architecture that is not in keeping with the history of the area. "What I fear is if one thing happens, other developers will move in with similar ideas," he explains, "Developers by their very nature exploit the landscape."

Looking down at a stone shrine lying in the path of the wrecker's ball in front of peasants' cottages where the development's recreation club will be built, the site foreman is more pragmatic. Will the Gods be angry that the developers have knocked down the shrine? "Not at all! The Gods will thank us!" he laughs. "After all, we're replacing these nasty old houses with beautiful new ones."

Troublesome Complex under New Management

By Wang Dandan

The construction of the Great Mall, said to be one of the largest foreign-approved complex in Beijing, transferred to its third developer last week. Before the third developer, Beijing Weigong Yuanding Real Estate Company, took over, the complex had proven to be more than the second developer, Tiancheng Online, and the original developer could handle.

What happened at this complex?

Before Weigong Yuanding started its try at developing the complex, the complex had already amassed 400 million yuan in debts from bank loans, investment by Tiancheng Online, construction fees and employee salary payments. The biggest headache for Su Xinzeng, the director of the board of the complex's first developer, was a credit crisis and a potential lawsuit from a bank for back payments. Because the complex's management failed to pay off their loans on time, their bank gave them a final deadline of June 27, after which the bank said it would file a lawsuit and refuse the complex any future loans.

Why was Weigong willing to walk into this apparent trap?

Weigong Yuanding is a local real estate company. According to

Zhang Lin, the spokesperson for Weigong Yuanding, there are three reasons why the company decided to take over the development of the complex. One, it could still prove to be profitable. Two, there is potential for the value of the complex to rise. Three because if Weigong Yuanding is successful in reviving the complex, it will be a boost to the company's reputation.

Can the complex be revived?

During the period of their co-operation, Tiantong Online and Su Xinzeng each held 50 percent stakes in the project and Su remained the director of the board.

Weigong Yuanding has chosen a different route by holding a 70 percent stake in the development compared with Su's 30 percent stake. Weigong Yuanding also took charge of appointing all top-level managers.

Background:

First Town was supposed to be completed in 2001 but remains unfinished and buyers of apartments have not been able to move in. The area's problems got more heated in February 2001 when a fight broke out during a meeting between representatives of apartment owners and the developer. Since then, the complex's developer has changed twice.

How Can I Get My Money Back for A Missing Square Meter?

By Hydie

Mr. Buy moved into a new apartment a year ago, but when he received his property right certificate a month ago from the Beijing Real Estate Bureau, he found his apartment is one square meter smaller than the area stipulated in his contract.

Mr. Buy demanded the developer return the money for the missing square meter, but the developer refused. Chen Xu, the lawyer at the Beijing Long'an Law Firm, checked the contract and informed Mr. Buy the developer is legally required

to return the money.

Chen added there are three kinds of situations that including the miscalculation of area of properties in which developers should return customers' over-payments:

1. if an apartment buyer makes a one-time payment and the area is not calculated correctly;
2. if a buyer pays completes payment through several installments and holds the property right certificate;
3. or, if a buyer completes payment through several installments but has yet to receive the property right certificate.

Lawsuits over Fees Hold Lesson for All

By Hydie

Beijing Jinfeng Real Estate Company sued Mr. Buy in January 2002 for failure to pay property management and heating fees. The court ruled against Mr. Buy and said he should pay the fees to the developer immediately. However, Mr. Buy did not accept the result and sued the developer two months later. The judge in the second case told Mr. Buy to provide more proof if he did not want to lose the case again.

Mr. Buy remembered that when he bought the apartment, he paid a far-above-average figure of 11,182 yuan in public maintenance funds and was able to produce the contract he

signed with the developer for the purchase of the apartment, which included the property management fee and heating fees for the first year.

The total more than covered the fees Mr. Buy was responsible to pay. The developer did not deliberately ignore the contract, because few buyers make such large fee payments before moving in and developers are used to collecting fees after apartment buyers move.

Mr. Buy's victory in the second case is a reminder to all apartment owners and prospective owners to keep all contracts and papers signed with developers in case of future difficulties.

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Music



Singers

Concert

For celebrating the 5th anniversary of the return of Hong Kong. Performed by Andy Lau, Nicholas Tse, Karen Mok, Gigi Leung. **Where:** Worker's Stadium. **When:** July 27, 7:30pm. **Admission:** 120-580 yuan. **Tel:** 6528 7675/6528 7750 ext. 198/508.

Evening of Mozart – Symphony Concert

By China Song and Dance Theater Symphony Orchestra. Program: Overture *Figaros Hochzeit*. **Where:** National Library Concert Hall, 33 Zhongguancun Nandajie, Haidian District. **When:** July 28. **Admission:** 80-280 yuan. **Tel:** 6528 7675/6528 7750 ext. 198/508.



Symphony concert

Symphony Orchestra

By China Song and Dance Theater Symphony Orchestra. Program: Mozart, Serenade Symphony No. 29; Beethoven, Symphony No. 7; Mendelssohn, Symphony No. 3; Chaikovsky, String Senenade Symphony No. 4. **Where:** National Library Concert Hall. **When:** July 26, 27. **Admission:** 10-60 yuan. **Tel:** 6528 7675/6528 7750 ext. 198/508.



Music at Get Lucky Bar

Iron Kite, Convenience Store, Fan Yin July 19. Third anniversary of band Painful Belief July 20. Sand, Wednesday's Travel, Smile July 26. Heavy Music Festival July 27. **Where:** Get Lucky Bar, east of the south gate of University of International Business and Economics (Duiwai Jingmao). **Admission:** 20-30 yuan. **Tel:** 6429 9109.

Trips

Rafting on Yongding River

Meet at Yongdingmen Railway Station (south of Taoranting Park) at 6:50 am. Spend Saturday afternoon rafting, go fishing at night and camp by the river. Return by train at 11 am or 5 pm. **Where:** Yanhe Cheng. **When:** July 20, 21. **Fee:** 420 yuan, 180 yuan for members. **Tel:** 6873 1735, 8851 2481.

Hiking

Where: West of Mentougou (Ming Village area). Explore a national park on the way to the Ming village on Saturday. Stay in a courtyard house in the Ming village, next morning complete scouting a five-hour route. One and half hours hike up, through a very green and wooded mountain trail. The top is a 1,700-meter-high plateau. **When:** July 27, 28, meet 8:30 am at the Lido outside Starbucks. **Drive time:** two and half hours. **Cost:** 400 yuan. **Email:** bjhikers@yahoo.co.uk

Weather

Friday July 19 Cloudy to overcast, showers
Max: 32C. Min: 22C.

Saturday July 20
Clear to overcast
Max: 33C. Min: 23C.

Sunday July 21
Clear to cloudy
Max: 33C. Min: 23C.

Monday July 22
Clear to cloudy
Max: 33C. Min: 23C.

Tuesday July 23
Clear to cloudy
Max: 32C. Min: 22C.

Wednesday July 24
Cloudy to overcast
Max: 31C. Min: 23C.

Thursday July 25
Overcast to cloudy
Max: 33C. Min: 23C.

We are glad to receive your feedback. We will print employment, language exchange and accommodation info for individuals. Feel free to email us at bjtodayinfo@ynet.com or call 6590 2520.
By Priscilla

Performances

Beijing Opera – The Newest Idea about Love

Director: Meng Jinghui, starring Yang Naiwen, Yang Ting. Love stories of several young people. **Where:** Capital Theater, Wangfujing Dajie. **When:** July 26 – August 4, 7:30pm. **Admission:** 80-280 yuan. **Tel:** 6528 7675/6528 7750 ext. 198/508. Tickets sold only on www.piao.com.cn/(english)

Peking Opera

Da Dian, Monkey King Makes Trouble in the Drag-



Main Actress Yang Ting

on Palace, July 19. *The Crossroads, Stealing the Magic Herb*, July 20. *The Empty-City Stratagem*, July 21. *Picking up a Jade Bracelet, Borrowing a Palm-leaf Fan*, July 22. *Escape of the Fourth Son of the Yangs, Stealing the Magic Herb*, July 23. *Picking up a Jade Bracelet, Combat in the Heavenly Palace*, July 24. **Where:** Opera Hall of Huguang Guild Hall, 3 Hufanglu, Xuanwu District. **When:** July 19-26, 7:30 pm. **Admission:** 100-180 yuan, 200, 380 yuan box ticket. **Tel:** 6351 8284.

Exhibitions



Painting by Wang Yuping

Director's Choice – Red Gate Gallery Group Exhibition

Brian Wallace, founder and director of Red Gate Gallery presents this group exhibition, which provides an insight into his appreciation and understanding of contemporary Chinese art. Twenty-two artists are represented, exploring issues such as gender, family planning and the environment, supplying a "social commentary" on the political, economical and cultural transformations within contemporary Chinese society. Artists include Su Xinping, Zhang Yajie, Sui Jianguo, Sheng Qi, Zheng Xuewu. **Where:** Red Gate Gallery, Dongbianmen Watchtower, Chongwenmen. **When:** July 23 – August 25, 10 am - 5 pm, Tuesday - Sunday. **Admission:** free. **Tel:** 6525 1005.

Summer Melody – Chinese Painting Exhibition

Traditional Chinese paintings such as flower-and-bird paintings, landscape and figure paintings by Feng Linzhang, Mi Chunmao, Hu Yongkai and Chen Daohong. New Vision - Oil Painting and Sculpture Exhibition. More than 30 selected oil paintings and 10 sculptures by Han Xuejun, Li Chunyao, Yin Kun, Cheng Xiangjun and Xin Yi. **Where:** Wan Fung Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng



Painting by Zeng Chuanxing

Activities

Walk and Talk – Ming Qing Furniture

Visit a private furniture collection under the guidance of a renowned expert. Hu Desheng, researcher at Palace Museum, will explain his formula for calculating prices for ancient furniture, taking into account style, material, origin, age and workmanship. He will also introduce tricks used by furniture manufacturers to fool unwary buyers. **Where:** meet at Kempinski Hotel lobby at 1:50 pm, a private collection showroom, and touch the wood specimens collected through years at Yue Fu Zhai. **When:** July 20, Saturday, 2-4:30 pm. **Admission:** 180 yuan (transportation, English translation provided). Membership ticket offers 10 percent or more discount. **Tel:** 8451 8767. **Email:** lhdbj@public.bta.net.cn



Illuminate the Great Wall – Outdoor Party

With more than 20 bands, DJs, artists and filmmakers in attendance, the Great Wall lights up. Let the great party of the summer illuminate you. **Where:** Jinshanling Great Wall. Buses departure August 3; 2, 4 and 6 pm. Return August 4; 2, 4, 6 pm. **Ticket:** 200 yuan (July 15 – August 1), 300 yuan (August 1-3). **Tel:** 13011 886112, 6401 1251.

Taichi and Kungfu Workshop

Xingyiquan, Taijiquan and Baguazhang rely not on strength or size, but on



Painting by Xu Jizhong

Heart Emotion and Colors – Chinese Painting Joint Exhibition by Ten Artists

Different styles of more than 50 works by artists including Xu Jizhong, He Bin, Yan Yonghui. They combine western color style with Chinese traditional paintings. **Where:** New Art Center, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District. **When:** July 21-28. **Admission:** free. **Tel:** 6528 9103.



Fable of Life – Contemporary Painting Exhibition

Five artists from Nanchang: Leng Shaoqiang, Lu Wei, Zhou Wenjun, Hu Yaxi and Zhang Siyong. **Where:** New Millennium Art Gallery, Xin Two, Diyang Tower, Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District. **When:** July 20-30, 9 am-7 pm. **Preview:** July 20, 3-7 pm. **Admission:** free. **Tel:** 8453 6193.

technique and the development of inner strength. See a demonstration of forms and learn a few techniques derived from them. **Presenter:** Zhang Shengli. **Translator:** Damon Perry. **Where:** meet at the south gate of Ditan Park (northwest of Lama Temple). **When:** July 27, 3:45 pm. **Tel:** 13910 534743.



Learn Massage from the Blind Masseuses

An interested group will form to learn and practice the skill. **Where:** Aboson Blind Massage Center. **When:** July 24, 7:30-10pm. **Fee:** 50 yuan. **Tel:** 6466 1247, 6465 2044.

Jiaozhi (dumpling) Workshop

Learn to make steamed and boiled jiaozi with different vegetarian and meat fillings. **Tel:** 13051 583118 (Sun Jing).

Reminders

Chen Shi (Stale Corpse) fourth anniversary and warm-up for their third album. July 20, 8 pm, Get Lucky Bar.

Movie: Chen Mo and Mei Ting. July 20, 2 pm, Space for Imagination Coffee House.

Language Exchange

A Chinese male, working at a university in Beijing, is looking for an English native speaker as language partner, overseas student preferably. If anybody is interested, feel free to contact at 6813 0654 (H) or 13161 188712.

Movies

Modern Times

Directed by Hu Bingliu, starring Bai Xueyun, Pan Yu, 1997, 90 minutes. Chinese with English subtitles. This film was designated by the government as a "1998 Key Film" because of its depiction of the difficulties a family has in adjusting to the changing economic system. An old woman is neglected by her son and sent to live with a housekeeper. The two women cannot get along, but gradually become close friends. Trouble erupts when the woman entrusts her life savings to the housekeeper so that she can open a restaurant in her hometown. Winner of first prize at the 1998 Shanghai Film Festival. **Where:** Cherry Lane Movies, Century Theater, 40 Liangmaqiao Lu, one kilometer east of the Lufthansa Center. **When:** July 26, 8 pm. **Admission:** 50 yuan. **Tel:** 6416 5318/9.



An Jun

Thursday Movies

Announcement: *Be There or Be Square* scheduled for July 25 is replaced by *Star Wars 2, Attack from Clones*, in Chinese no English Subtitles. **Where:** Dongchuang Cinema, 3 Xinzhongjie, Dongzhimenwai, subway or bus 24, 44, 815 to Dongzhimen. **When:** July 25, 8:30 pm. **Admission:** 30 yuan. **Tel:** 6415 7332.



Starwar

Farinelli - Voce regina

Directed by Gerard Corbiau, Italian/French with English subtitles. In the 18th century, no man was more famous, more beloved, or more celebrated than the man called Farinelli. With all the charisma, talent, drive and success of a modern-day rock star, Farinelli had everything: money, talent, fame, women and the voice of an angel. **Where:** Cultural Office of the Italian Embassy, 2 Sanlitun Dong'er jie. **When:** July

Sports & Health

Activities at Evolution Fitness Center

Summer swimming for children. Multi-level swimming lessons for students during summer vacation. Fee: 500 yuan for 10 classes (member's discount available). Belly Dancing. Instructor: Layla (French). **When:** every Wednesday, 8pm. Tai Ji. Instructor: Ma Dehong - 10 years Taiji teaching experience. 6:45 pm, Mondays and Thursdays. Spinning Cycle, a popular class in the west. Daily. **Where:** Evolution Fitness Center, Dabeiyao, Chaoyang District. **Tel:** 6567 0266, 6567 4743.

Summer Tennis Training Course

20-hour training class for teenagers aged 10 to 16. **Where:** Shangri-La Hotel, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu. **When:** July 22 – August 2, 8-10 am, Monday - Friday. **Fee:** 800 yuan. **Tel:** 6841 2211 ext. 2881/2 (available till July 20).

Activities at the Latino's

Four-week Beginner's Salsa Course. Teacher Steve Hill introduces salsa and merengue. Those who have attended one or

25, 7 pm. **Admission:** free. **Tel:** 6532 2187.



students. **Tel:** 6501 7501.

Korean Movies

A Mystery of the Cube, Libera Me. **Where:** News and Culture Department of the Korean Embassy, 38 Xiaoyun Lu, Chaoyang District. **When:** July 19, 26, 5:30 pm. **Admission:** free. **Tel:** 8453 8112/3/4.



Libera Me

Breaking the Waves

Directed by Lars von Trier, 1996. Winner of the Grand Prix du Jury at Cannes 1996, Cesar for Best Foreign Film, the EFA award for Best European Film and an Academy Award nomination for Emily Watson in the leading role. **Where:** Space for Imagination Coffee House, 5 Xiwangzhuang Xiaoqu (opposite the east gate of Qinghua University). **When:** July 20, 7 pm. **Admission:** 5 yuan. **Tel:** 6279 1280.



Breaking the Waves

Food

Cool Summer

Korean Buffet. Delicacies from Korea. **Where:** Atrium, Hilton Hotel Beijing. **When:** Every Wednesday, dinner. Cool Summer. Summer is here, and you do not have to travel far to enjoy a relaxing outdoor atmosphere. Look no further than the newly established Fountain Terrace at the Hilton Beijing. With cool summer breeze under twinkling stars, you can choose from a wide selection of snacks or specialties from the grill, indulge in ice-cold draft beer and other delicious cocktails all prepared specially for your enjoyment. **Where:** Hilton Hotel Beijing. **When:** summer, daily, from 6 pm till midnight. **Admission:** free for kids under six years old. **Tel:** 6466 2288 ext. 7332.

New Creations of Cantonese Flavor

New executive chef Chou Ngai has more than ten years experiences as head chef in one of Hong Kong's best Cantonese restaurants "Fu Lin Men." He brings great excitement to the Cantonese offerings with his artistic creations. His specialties in-



Cool Summer

clude Abalone, Shark Fin, Clay Pot dishes such as Glass Noodle and Crab in Clay Pot, and Braised Live Turtle in Clay Pot. **Where:** Shangri-La Hotel, 29 Zizhuyuan Lu. **Tel:** 6841 2211.

Promotion at the Great Wall

Brandy Meets Lobster. **Where:** French Bistro. New High Tea. Sip a Starbucks coffee while enjoying classical music and sample pastry chef Cord's Hennessey bitter chocolate terrine and Moet en Chandon mousse cake. **Where:** Atrium, Great Wall Sheraton Hotel. **When:** July. **Tel:** 6590 5566 ext. 2116.

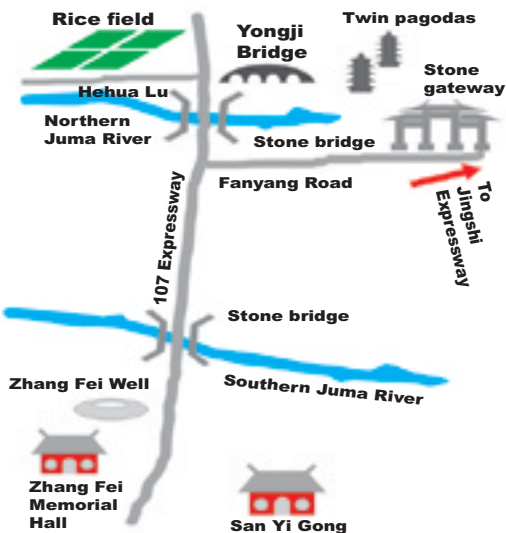
Announcement

Due to circumstances beyond our control, the movies scheduled for July 17 and 25 cannot be screened. People who have already bought tickets can see a different movie in August by showing the stub. *Two Girls*, August 1. *New Legend of Shaolin*, August 8. *The Lovers*, August 15. *Chrysanthemum Tea*, August 22. *Umbrella Story*, August 29. **Where:** Dongchuang Cinema. **Tel:** 6415 7332.

Leisurely Getaway

Home Fit for Heroes

Zhuozhou produces imperial rice, romantic royal stories, tall tales



By Jiang Zhong

Modern chemical fertilizer is forbidden. "The locals will not enlarge the field to expand output," says rice dealer Liu Changzheng. He scoops up a glob of paddy.

"The extra parcel of land would worsen the flavor of this rice as that parcel has not been nourished for centuries on this ancient muck."

Liu comes to the city of Zhuozhou once a week to check on his valuable rice. The *gong mi* (贡米 imperial rice) is the symbol of the city. The imperial techniques have been handed down and maintained for more than 1,000 years on this 10-hectare field.

The locals are at their busiest today, one of the hottest days of early July. They dig a 12-meter well and draw water from underground to irrigate the rice.

When I was young, the farmers didn't need to dig a well," says Liu. "Three-inch-deep water was accumulated in the field around the year. Loaches and frogs were the best friends of children."

Do not eat the produce
It is harvest season. Liu squats beside a pump, cups the cold water in his hands. This water tastes pretty good too.

In the heat of the sun, the farmers' skin has turned a kind of reddish-brown. Mobile phones on their belts belie the modern world outside.

The farmers have never tasted their own rice. Half the rice will be handed to the State, as it has been for some 600 years.

"The local authority collects the remaining half of the harvest and compensates them with cooking oil and other kinds of rice," says Liu.

Lotus Road (荷花路 Hehua Lu) cuts across the field and ends at the junction with Beijing-Shenzhen Highway 107 that runs over the Juma (拒马) River.

Explosive Pagodas
Leaving the bridge behind, head south along the highway towards the twin pagodas. As the tallest buildings of Zhuozhou, the pagodas helped outsiders to locate the capital city in ancient times.

"I used to play hide-and-seek with my friends in the pagodas when I was young," says Liu.

The top of the south pagoda was damaged in the warlords' wars of 1930s. The city began renovating the pagoda in 1999. They stopped two months ago owing to a cash shortage.

Workers found an undetonated shell in the pagoda.

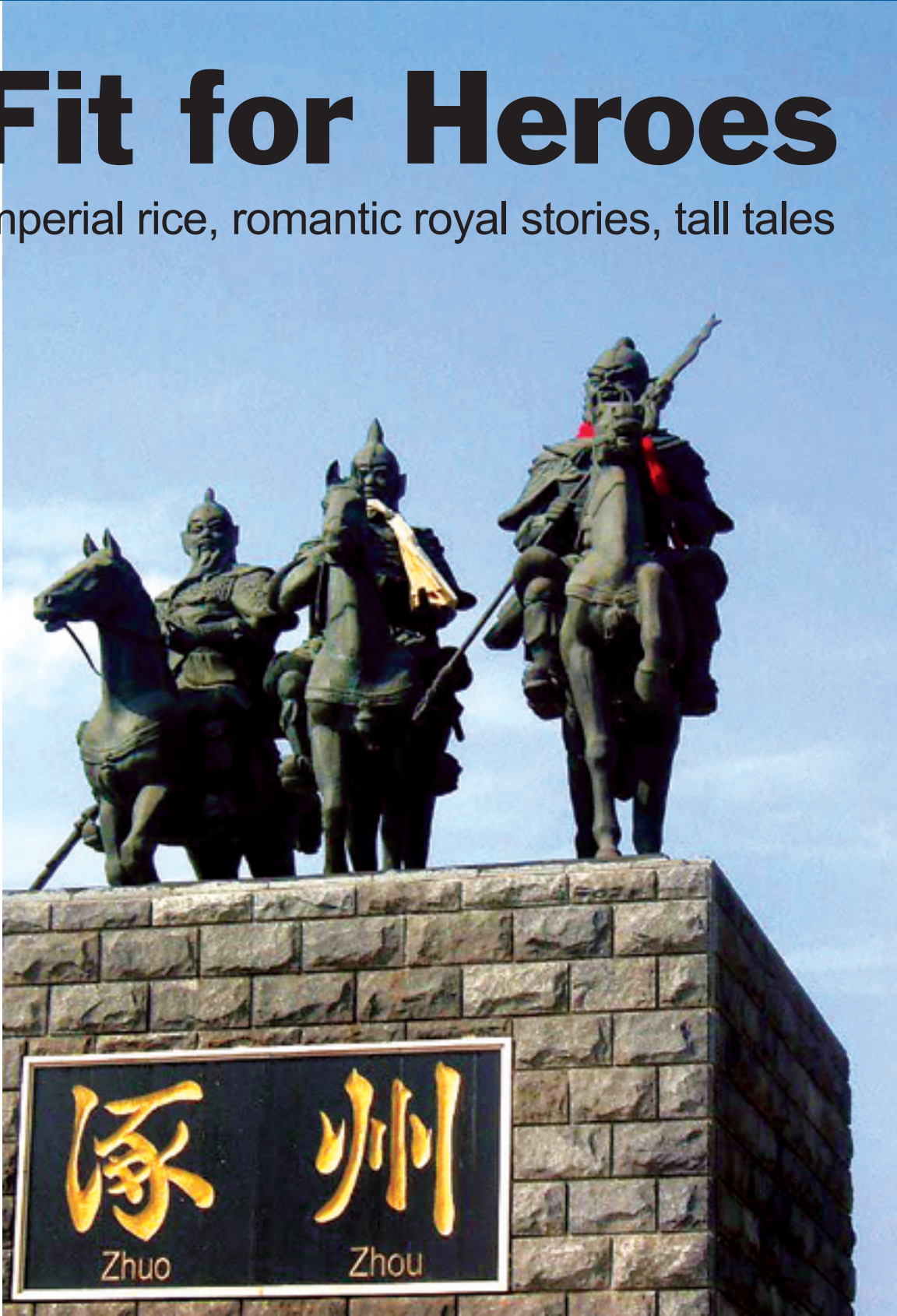
"The shell was transported to the remote suburbs and detonated, leaving a 2-meter crater. How terrible! We had been playing on a time bomb all those years."

The better-preserved northern pagoda is now confined in the city's electric power company backyard parking lot. Wang Xinghai guards the company vehicles.

"Sometimes at night we drink tea in the top floor of the pagoda," says Wang.

"We are treated to a refreshing breeze and a spectacular view of the starry sky."

The farmers have never treated themselves to the imperial rice they grow



Photos by Zhao Shiyu

Wang and pals are privileged. Most of Beijing's ancient pagodas bar visitors. Wang leans to open the heavy wooden door.

Each detail inside the damp, cool building intensifies a feeling of ancient mystery. The walls are painted with intricate patterns. But only the red bottom remains today.

Some patterns can be vaguely distinguished in niches once used to house statues of the gods. The brick steps make for a completely unsafe, completely recommended ascent.

"They were destroyed by termites." Wang sometimes reaches out to the walls for stability. Light that seeps in through the windows creates different effects at different times of the day.

Lotus seats on the second floor were moved from niches to the windows. "Some locals removed the lotus seats to see whether treasures were buried under them as legends had said.

"There were also Buddha statues sitting on the lotus seats. All but one was removed during the Cultural Revolution. Even the last one lost its head."

Today the beheaded Buddha sits by a window. He faces the world outside as if looking for his head in the brush beneath.

Wang must leave for lunch. Before leaving, he suggests two must-sees for a Zhuozhou visit.

Three Kingdoms City
Continue south down Highway 107. After the ancient earth wall of the city and the Da Shi Qiao (大石桥 Big Stone Bridge), comes Zhong Yi

Dian (忠义店), the village of Zhang Fei.

Zhang Fei, a hero of the Chinese classic novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, has been worshipped in East Asian countries for some 600 years. Liu's parents' home is also in this village. Liu suggests first we take a look at the ancient well.

Liu sits in the shadow of the old pagoda tree beside the well. He sucks on a 0.8 percent tar Zhongnanhai. He tells the old, old story.

Zhang Fei used to sell pork at village market. He stored the pork in the well wall in summer to prevent it from rotting. To prevent theft, he covered the mouth of the well with a heavy stone. The stone was so heavy only he himself could move it.

One day, a Shanxi green bean dealer, Guan Yu, came to market. Thirsty, he moved the stone to draw water from the well. Then he noticed the pork and ate that too.

When he found out, Zhang started a fight with Guan. Neither could subdue the other. Liu Bei, a straw sandal dealer, broke up the fight. He suggested instead of fighting, the three form a brotherhood.

They performed their rite in the peach garden beside the well. This chapter of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is much beloved by Chinese boys. The three heroes went on to establish the Shu Dynasty (221-263).

The peach garden today has tables and desks for drinking tea and chatting.

The tablets at Zhang Fei's memorial hall are worth a visit. Besides the Qianlong calligraphy, some tablets have bullet holes.

"Today the beheaded Buddha sits by a window. He faces the world outside as if looking for his head in the brush beneath."

Flaming Mountains

By Jiang Zhong / Yang Yang

Beijing has been boiling recently. But in Xinjiang, the people know temperatures of up to 45°C. Around the famous Flaming Mountains, the temperatures can touch 55°C (131°F).

The 98-kilometer range runs east-west through the Turpan Depression, a branch of the Tianshan Mountains formed by tectonic movements of the Himalayas 50 million years ago.

Erosion and folded belts formed by crust movements have created an exotic, undulating landscape with crisscrossing gullies and ravines. In the heat of the sun, the red rock glows as hot air curls like smoke, hence the name.

The Flaming Mountains are so hot and so dry "flying birds even 500 kilometers away dare not come". Yet the mountains at the same time act

like a giant natural dam for the underground reservoir in the basin.

Situated north of the ancient Silk Road, the Flaming Mountains radiate with traveler's tales and contain significant relics. The mountains are best known by Chinese for the 16th century classic *Journey to the West*, which describes Buddhist monk Xuan Zang's pilgrimage to India.

In the novel, the monk encounters a wall of flames — an apt description for these mountains — but is able to extinguish them with help of his companion, the Monkey King.

Getting there:

The mountains are 98 kilometers long and 9 kilometers wide. The highest peak is 40 kilometers east of Turpan and 831.7 meters above sea level. Since the new highway was completed, the time between Turpan and Urumqi has been substan-



Photo by Jason Zhao

tially shortened to about two hours. From Urumqi, buses leave about every half an hour from the main bus station or the Erdaoqiao market. The journey takes between three to four hours and tickets cost 11 to 22 yuan.

There are also Turpan-bound trains from Urumqi, but the bus is more convenient as Turpan's train station is located 50 kilometers outside of the town itself, making visitors catch a bus into town.

Background



Worshippers offer red silk to Zhang Fei's statue

Three Kingdoms — All You Need to Know

By Jiang Zhong

The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is a semi-fictional literary masterpiece written by Luo Guanzhong during the Ming Dynasty.

Traditional historians depict these bloody times as a golden age of chivalry and although the events took place more than 1,700 years ago, characters such as Liu Bei, Cao Cao, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei and Zhu Geliang remain household names today.

Their exploits, courage and adventures saturate the novel's description of one of the most turbulent periods of China's history toward the end of the Han Dynasty when corruption ran rampant in the imperial court, the eunuchs holding sway.

Coupled with floods, plagues and locusts, hunger and dissatisfaction among the peasants escalated into endless rebellions.

The court, unable to suppress the rebellion with government troops, issued a call to warlords across the country to assist him in crushing the rebels. From then on, the Han Emperor's power waned as warlords jockeyed for position. Sovereignty became a struggle between three states: Wei, Wu and Shu.

The novel itself has a tendency to glorify Liu Bei, a distant relative of the Han Emperor, who later became the King of Shu, while condemning Cao Cao, a formative figure in Chinese history, who usurped the throne of the last emperor of Han and became the King of Wei.

The *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is not only about struggle and conflicts among warlords, but also loyalty, betrayal, courage, lust, determination, responsibility, repaying the kindness of others and trust among people.

For those who want to learn more about the three heroes, the San Yi Gong (三义宫 Palace of Three Heroes) at Lou Sang Miao (楼桑庙) Village two kilometers ahead offers the chance.

At the entrance, statues stand on a high terrace with two Chinese characters "zhuo" "zhou". The villagers tell outsiders the statues stand for the spirit of Zhuozhou.

Lou Sang Miao is an ideal picnic spot. Villagers like to tell visitors tall tales not found in the official books.

Fan Yang Road (范阳路), the most important artery of the city, ends at the glazed gateways east of the city. Emperor Qianlong's calligraphy is carved here — *Tian Xi Di Yi Zhou* (the most important city of China).

Jingshi Expressway, not far away, takes drivers back to Beijing. Look back over your shoulder and maybe catch a glimpse of the glazed tiles glimmering gold in the setting imperious sun.

Getting to Zhuozhou:

From Liuliqiao, take the Jingshi Expressway to Zhuozhou

Chinawide